

THE LONDON READER

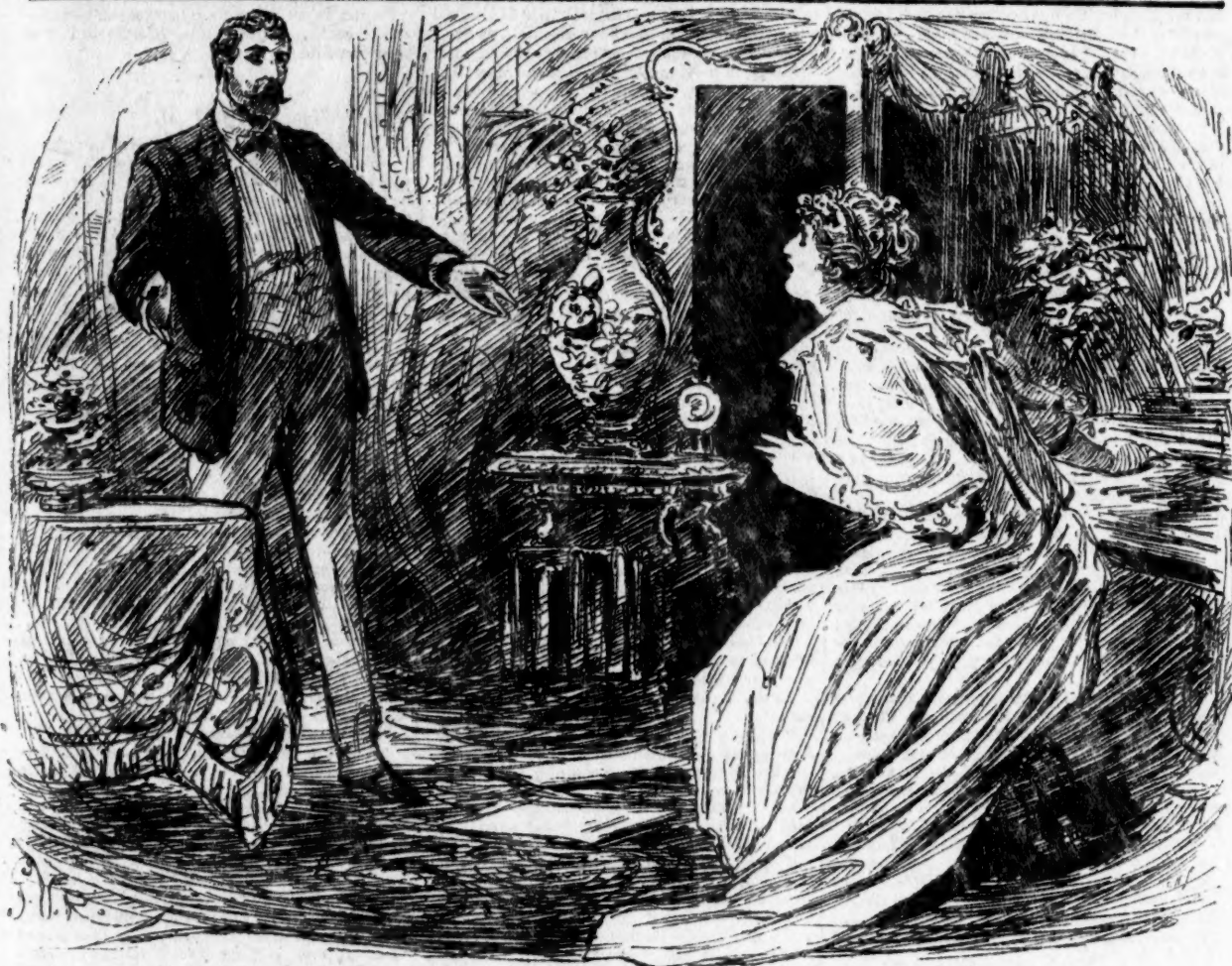
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"JOYCE," THOROLD SAID, IN LOW, DEEP TONES, "JOYCE, I HAVE RETURNED."

A COUNTRY MOUSE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Don't you think we could manage it, Milly?" said father, puckering his brow as he always did when perplexed. "It would be such a very good thing for Joyce. I daresay, as a clergyman, I should not trouble about the future, or anticipate the rainy day, but because a man has religion he need not be devoid of common sense, or forget to be provident."

"One can save so much out of two hundred a year," answered mother, with a sad little smile, "especially when one has six children to clothe and educate, and a certain appearance to maintain. There, I'm not grumbling, dear, but Joyce cannot go; she needs a number of things to make her presentable, and the journey alone would require all the money I have scraped together for your new overcoat."

"Oh," remarked my father cheerfully, "I can

do without that another winter; with your clever mending the old one will carry me through next season."

Then I spoke for the first time. I *did* feel disappointed, but I would not show this to my dear unselfish parents, so I said,—

"I could not enjoy myself at all if you had to sacrifice so much for me, daddy; so it is settled that I remain at home. I don't really mind one bit."

Suddenly mother's face flushed, her pretty eyes sparkled.

"Oh, Jem, I have found a way out of the dilemma. You remember that queer little necklet of gold and scotch pebbles I was wearing when we met first; it is far too fine for me now, beside being so old-fashioned. Won't you take it into Chatterley this afternoon? I haven't a doubt the man at the old curiosity shop would buy it"; and when I began to protest against such generosity, mother only laughed, bidding me go away until she and father had settled their business satisfactorily. But I heard her as I passed through the door—

"It would be so good a thing for her, Jem, and I should like to see my girls settled before I go";

to which he made answer, "I had no idea you were such a desperate schemer; and after your sorry experience of matrimony—"

"Jem! not another word of that kind! If we are poor at least we are happy."

A little later father, wearing his shabby great coat (for it was October, and very chilly), passed through the rectory garden, going in the direction of Chatterley, the small market town three miles distant; and mother joined me in the school-room, which was empty now, save for ourselves.

"I hope he will be successful," she said sitting down by the fire; "I should like you to have a little pleasure, you work so hard with the children; but I wonder how I shall manage without you!"

Such praise from mother was very sweet to me; it quite atoned for the fatigue and dullness of the daily routine; it made me feel I could freely forego the much-talked-of holiday. But when I told her that, she only laughed, and drawing a letter from her pocket read it aloud to me for the second time.

It was from my godmother, Miss Marchmont, a very rich woman living near to Land's End.

She wrote saying that her cousin and her,

Thorold Dene, had finished his University career, and was now prepared to interest himself in the management of the estates; that she trusted he would also embrace a political life. But Marchmont Hall was a dull place for a young fellow, so that she had given him *carte blanche* to invite a friend from time to time, and she wished too, to renew acquaintance with her two god-daughters, Sybilla Varley and Joyce Halifax. So she begged that I might go at once to her. Miss Varley was abroad, but would return in three weeks, and, like myself, take up residence at the Hall for six months. "At the close of which time," she concluded, "I shall beg each girl to accept a slight reward for having endured so long the loneliness of my Cornish home, and the unentertaining society of myself."

"I wish you would tell me something about my god-mother," I said. "I know literally nothing of her; and who is Sybilla Varley? Shall I like her?"

"How can I tell, my dear, when she is just a name to me and nothing more. She is the daughter of the man Miss Marchmont was to marry. But he jilted her for Lady Clara Thurlbourn, who was not worthy to tie her shoe-lace; but your godmother, I think, always kept a tender memory of him in her heart; she might have married many times, for she was not only rich but beautiful. I never saw a woman so changed by man's falsehood as she; when we—your father and I—were married, she came to the wedding. She is six years my senior, so is now only fifty. At that time she was twenty-five, a handsome merry girl, full of hope for the future. When I saw her a year later she was a grave almost bitter woman, with never a kind word to say for a man."

"She promised to stand sponsor for my first child, provided it was a girl. The first three were boys; they did not live long enough to need formal ceremony; then you were born, and Miss Marchmont kept her promise faithfully. Since then we have not met; she lives all the year through at the Hall, and holidays have not fallen to my share of late. Not that I complain, Joyce—I can never be quite so happy anywhere as in my own home."

"This Mr. Thorold Dene is a cousin about four times removed. He calls Miss Marchmont aunt however, by her desire, the disparity between their ages being so great; he is about twenty-three, and now having exhausted the whole store of my knowledge, I must run away as Jane needs assistance. In the meanwhile you can be getting on with Doreen's frock."

Well, father was more fortunate than we had ventured to hope; he disposed of the necklet for six pounds; three mother set aside for the two journeys; the fourth was my pocket money, "and," she said, "Joyce, it is little enough, but you must manage with it; the other is needed for your clothes."

What a fuss and bother followed the acceptance of my godmother's invite. All who were able to do anything at all were pressed into my service; a length of cheap black grenadine was bought, and with a few knots of crimson ribbon, and an old black silk gown of mother's for a foundation, we made quite a pretty evening dress; the first I had ever owned. A walking dress, a hat, and a pair of shoes completely swallowed up the remainder of our capital; but I felt passing grand with my new possessions, especially as Lois (the next girl in the family) went into raptures over them.

At last I was off; I had bidden them all good-bye, had kissed daddy on the platform with as much fervour as though we were parting for ever, or I was bound for the North Pole. I even cried a little, because I had never been from home before, and scarcely knew until this last hour, how dear all my loved ones were, or how fast was their life upon my heart.

The journey was cold, long and wearisome, but although we halted twice, I had not sufficient courage to enter a refreshment-room; once I had my hand upon the door, only to draw back when I saw a crowd of men gratifying their appetites.

I was so hungry, a roll of bread would have been delicious food to me then.

I felt almost like fainting when I reached

Trefellan, and hoped in my heart that the Hall would not be at any great distance from the station.

A man in handsome livery addressing me deferentially recalled my wandering thoughts; he had been sent to meet a lady, Miss Halifax by name, and having confessed to my identity he led me towards an elegantly appointed carriage, giving some orders to another servant with regard to my luggage. The next moment I was bowling along the highway in state, thinking of the wonder my sisters would feel when I described all to them. We were soon at the Hall, and as I crossed the threshold a comely looking girl advanced to meet me. "If you please Miss, Miss Marchmont said she thought you would like to go to your room at once; and that you were not to dress for dinner to-night, as you would be tired, and there are no guests beside yourself."

I followed her up to my rooms; two had been allotted to my use, a luxury I appreciated, because at the rectory we were cramped for space. They were furnished sumptuously; not an article in them that did not tell of lavish expenditure. I sank into a chair with a sigh of content, whilst the girl hovered about me, performing little services in an unobtrusive way. Presently another entered with a dainty meal, daintily spread upon the tray, and I attacked it with a relish which would have shocked a fashionable woman. Then when I had rested, and warmed my chill hands by the blazing fire, I followed my conductress to the drawing-room, which was but dimly lit.

"As I entered a lady rose from a couch; she was tall and stately, with the most beautiful face I had ever seen, from out of which her large, dark eyes glowed with almost the brilliancy of youth; but though not a wrinkle was visible on the smooth cheeks or the wide brow her crown of hair was hardly less white than the costly lace of which her cap was composed. As I timidly advanced she put out her slender, jewelled hands, and drawing me near, scrutinised my every feature before she said,—

"So this is Joyce, the little country mouse. I am glad to welcome you to my home. How very like your mother you are!"

At that I laughed, her manner setting me at ease.

"Why do you look so amused?" she asked, drawing me down beside her.

"Because you compared me with mother, and everybody calls her a pretty woman still; whilst I am the reverse. I never had a compliment paid me before. Lois stoutly declares that I am the most ill-favoured of the brood."

Miss Marchmont smiled, but she said nothing in reply, only she patted the hand she still retained, sitting gazing thoughtfully before her.

Presently I heard the sound of hasty steps, and a man's voice singing.

"That is Thorold," said Miss Marchmont; "he is late again as usual;" but there was neither annoyance nor anger in her tone, and she smiled as a young man entered, exclaiming,—

"Awfully sorry, aunt, but by Jove—oh! I beg pardon, I thought you were alone," and then I was being introduced to him. He had grey eyes under his level brown brows, and they gleamed mischievously as he said,—

"So you are the country mouse, Miss Halifax! All along I have threatened aunt with exposure, and I am a fellow of my word—except in the trifling matter of punctuality; Sybilla Varley is the town mouse—they are the names by which you are each best known. Do you know I am wondering how you will agree!"

"Beautifully, of course, or I shall be disappointed," remarked my hostess. "I think each will be able to teach the other something worth learning."

I shook my head ruefully.

"I don't suppose Miss Varley would be interested in teaching young ideas to shoot, darning stockings, mending torn jackets, or occasionally helping to cook the dinner, and that is all I can do."

"A very good all too," laughed Mr. Dene; "now let us go to dinner."

I did not feel at all shy that evening; in her gracious, stately fashion my godmother was very

kind, and Mr. Dene did his best to make the hours pass pleasantly. When I retired for the night Miss Marchmont went with me, and when she had kissed me, said,—

"Now, Joyce, you are to do just precisely as you like whilst you remain with me; and I should prefer you to call me godmother; we will not build up a wall of formality between us, and Sybilla in her letters always addresses me in that fashion."

When she had left me I stood looking at my reflection in an opposite mirror, and wishing—why I could not guess then—that I had been born beautiful.

CHAPTER II.

I WAS not even pretty. Kind friends sought to console me by saying I had "an interesting face," which good-natured remark I accepted for what it was worth. I think my hair was my best possession; it was russet brown then, wavy, and there was such a quantity of it that it fell like a cloak about my shoulders when I let it down at night. But my features were irregular; fortunately my complexion was good, and for the rest I had brown eyes, and I stood exactly five feet two in high-heeled shoes.

I fell asleep that night wondering over Sybilla Varley, hoping we should be good friends, and dreaming all sorts of foolish dreams about the next six months.

In the morning my godmother drove me round the estate and through the village, talking well and brightly about many things; and wherever she went faces brightened, tired eyes smiled a welcome, until I found it difficult to believe that in anything she could be bitter.

We stopped at a three-roomed cottage, the pink of neatness. A young woman, with a pretty baby in her arms, came out hurriedly; my godmother, addressing her as Martha, asked after baby's health, which had for some time been indifferent. The mother answered,—

"She is stronger, ma'am, much stronger, and can almost stand alone now. You don't know what a joy she is to me!"

"I think I can guess, Martha; may Heaven spare her to you!" And again we drove on.

Suddenly Miss Marchmont said,—

"You are thinking Martha Swann more fortunate than her neighbours, because her home is so clean and even pretty. Well, I suppose that would be the general opinion, although she is more miserable than many a woman who has a drunken husband. She was housemaid at the Hall before her marriage, and a better, more cheerful girl never lived. She married a journeyman butcher; nearly everybody envies her because he is a quiet, steady, stay-at-home man; but Joyce, she never can do anything that pleases him. If ever you are foolish enough to take a lover do not take a man who is easily depressed, or one who considers it his duty to interfere with household affairs. You had better be dead; though, as a matter of fact, she who weds is always more or less mad, for no man is trustworthy. You have the Psalmist's words for it, 'They are all liars,' and I think he spoke from self-experience."

I was silent, not knowing how to reply; perhaps my godmother saw this, for presently she said with an odd little laugh,—

"You won't agree with me, mouse! Well, well, I can only hope you may have a happy life. Now I have something to say to you which concerns you more nearly, my dear. I am perfectly aware that your parents sacrificed some little comfort when they sent you to me; so I thought best how to repay them in a measure for their unselfishness. Here are twenty-five pounds for your own personal use; when you leave me I shall give you another cheque for the same amount."

I drew back hurriedly. We were proud people, even though we were poor.

"Silly child!" smiled Miss Marchmont. "I intend to do the same by Sybilla, for her folks are not only poor but extravagant."

And with that she thrust the cheque into my hand.

I had never been so rich in my life, and could hardly wait until the morrow to send mother a warm mantle in place of her shabby Cashmere.

We had a pleasant time, and over luncheon (which Mr. Dene did not share) my godmother asked me how I intended to spend her gift. She spoke to me in a very gentle tone when I said I had already one evening dress, and I thought of buying the small fry: some boots, dresses, &c.; then, kissing me, she remarked,—

"That money is for your own use; the little ones shall not go short. You shall give me a list of their requirements to-morrow, and we will have a good day's shopping. There, not another word, child; I won't hear you!"

In the evening Mr. Dene joined us, declaring he was dreadfully tired, having been shooting all day; but when we had dined he went with us to the drawing-room, saying he hated to sit alone with the wine, and if I sang he would be glad to play my accompaniments.

I glanced at Miss Marchmont; she seemed already half asleep, and I whispered a fear that we should disturb her. The dark eyes opened wide at that.

"My dear Joyce, I am only 'foxing,' as Thorold calls it; I like nothing so well as music, and your mother told me once in a letter that you both sang and played well."

"We are all musical," I admitted, "even to the baby, Ethel; she is only eight years old, and her exercises put our poor instrument out of tune awfully. The repairing is a considerable item to us—" and then I stopped short, blushing furiously, because my listeners had exchanged glances, which I considered full of amusement.

But when Mr. Dene had played the opening bars of "Cujus Animam" I forgot all else in the bliss of singing those lovely notes, to a perfectly rendered accompaniment on so splendid an instrument. When I had ended my godmother thanked me warmly.

"Dear," she said, "at least you have one special gift—your voice is lovely. But who taught you to sing?"

"The organist at home. I lead the choir, and really know scarcely anything but sacred music. But I love singing."

"I said you did," remarked Mr. Dene, in a matter-of-fact tone; "you have a 'singing' face, and have not disappointed me. Now we will try some secular duets—oh! I shall work you very hard; I am promising myself some awfully good times this winter."

There was a fat lazy pony in the stables, and my godmother suggested I should learn to ride. I hesitated, feeling half afraid, but Mr. Dene caught eagerly at the suggestion, offering himself to become my teacher.

He was very patient and good to me, so that I quickly began to anticipate that daily ride, which from a walk soon became a scamper.

I remember one morning we were returning when he said,—

"Why such a grave face, little mouse! You look as if you had the affairs of the nation on your shoulders."

"I was thinking, is it quite right for me to lead the life I am leading? I fear that it may spoil me for what comes after. I need not to mind being poor—that is, not very much; but—but—I shall find everything so different now. It would be easier to go at once than later."

"Aunt wouldn't like that," he answered, "and I do not believe it would be an easy matter to spoil you. Aren't you happy with us, Miss Halifax?"

"Too happy," I answered, with a deep drawn breath. "That is why I ought to go; because you see at home they all love me dearly, and although I am not a clever girl, I am of some use to mother."

"Precisely; but life wasn't intended to be all work and worry. Then, too, Sybilla Varley arrives to-morrow, and we count on you to entertain her."

"On me! I shall fail you miserably; she is worse than the old man of the sea to me—a perfect nightmare—she is sure to despise me."

"We shall see;" calmly, "but you must not leave us so abruptly. Promise you will stay the given time—for my sake, Joyce;" the last words

were spoken very softly, whilst his eyes sought mine.

I did not answer. Speech just then was not easy, but as he helped me from my saddle he said,—

"Are you going to be merciful? Remember, I want you."

"I will stay," I whispered back, and fled to the house, my heart throbbing, my brain in a whirl. I had tried all along to hide it even from myself, but now I was fain to confess that from that first hour of our meeting I had loved Thorold Dene. He was so unlike any man I had previously known. With all his gaiety and good humour he impressed one with a sense of his moral and intellectual superiority, and even though he never cared for me save as a humble friend, I must always be a better woman for having met and loved him.

On the morrow Sybilla arrived. I did not see her until she came down to dinner, having been driving with a friend of my godmother's. I was wearing my new grenadine, and felt exceedingly smart until she entered the room; then I sank back to my original insignificance.

She was so tall, so lovely, so beautifully dressed; extravagant the Varleys might be, in my ignorance I could not believe them poor, for Sybilla's dress alone would have cost what seemed a fortune to me.

She wore white silk with a deep violet velvet train. There were Parma violets at her breast and in her golden hair.

An awful fear assailed me when I looked at her exquisitely fair face. Surely no man in his sober senses would give a second thought to me when she was near.

"I am glad to see you, Sybilla," said Miss Marchmont, kindly.

I thought her eyes had taken a new expression as they rested on the fresh guest. Perhaps she was remembering that old dead romance in which her father played so cruel a part. But she smiled as she spoke, and then introduced us. Miss Varley murmured some polite words, whilst she calmly and critically examined my face and valued my dress with her beautiful violet eyes; then sinking into a chair she addressed her conversation to my godmother until Thorold entered.

She was quite animated throughout the dinner, and afterwards begged him to take her through the conservatories, saying she "adored flowers."

Thorold said at once,—

"You will come too, Miss Halifax;" but I declined. Already I felt that Sybilla and I could never be friends, and I was miserable. I felt my holiday was spoiled, and wished myself home again.

To my surprise Sybilla, who had scarcely addressed me during the evening, tapped at my door as she passed to her own room.

"May I come in?" she asked. "I want to talk to you," and as I could not courteously refuse so simple a request I admitted her.

Appropriating the easiest chair, she remarked,—

"How really dull it is here. Doesn't Miss Marchmont ever see anybody who is somebody?" I flushed under the careless insult, but Sybilla, with a yawn, went on. "I did not wish to come at all; but the pater insisted that I should. I believe he thinks he owes the old lady some reparation. They were engaged once, you know; but he was idiot enough to marry my mother (who had scarcely a penny of her own), and she has been fool enough to remain single for his sake. Then the pater is wise in his generation. He believes that Miss Marchmont will make me a legatee; and there is Thorold Dene."

"What of him?" I asked with a queer sense of suffocation.

"How very innocent we are! Thorold is presentable, and he is heir; a girl might do worse than marry him. Do you mean to say that you have not taken advantage of these three weeks spent in his society? Oh, you need not look so indignant. I have come with the intention of marrying him, so you may as well resign all hope. I do not think (with a calm appreciation of her reflection in the mirror), no I do not think you have the ghost of a chance. You cannot compete with me."

The blood flamed into my face as I said hotly,—

"I should be ashamed to entertain such thoughts, doubly ashamed to give expression to them."

She laughed lightly.

"Oh, you little quiet women are the worst of all; but really, my friend, I owe you no malice, and I thought it well to advise you not to waste time and talent in trying to catch Thorold Dene."

Then she rose, drifting rather than walking from the room; and I stood speechless with rage. Yet at home they always said I had the sunniest temper of all—evidently I was not improving.

CHAPTER III.

It was a week later. Sybilla and I were seated alone at breakfast, Miss Marchmont being confined to her room with a severe cold, and Thorold was already out intent upon his duties.

Sybilla had quite a pile of letters, and over one she laughed with contemptuous amusement; presently she flung it to me, saying,—

"Read, mark, learn and digest, and see for yourself, Joyce, what fools men, who are in love, can be. That"—pointing to the closely-written sheet—"is from one who professes to prize me above and beyond all!"

I put back the letter.

"I would not betray his love and confidence if I were you; honest affection should never be the subject for ridicule; and I would rather not hear anything about your unfortunate admirer."

"Spoken like a parson's daughter!" she cried, laughing lightly; "really you are a credit to Mr. Halifax's training. Do you help him with his sermons? There, we won't quarrel; I must have a confidence, and you are too conscientious to betray me (this with a fine sneer). If they knew at home that Guy Litchfield so much as dared to lift his eyes to me there would be an awful scene."

"Why?" I asked, bluntly; "isn't Mr. Litchfield a gentleman?"

"Not what we call a gentleman. I met him when I was down at Aunt Maggie's. I was idle; the time went dreadfully slow, and, to make a clean breast of it, I flirted desperately with the only good-looking man in the place—Guy Litchfield, master of the national school. He ought to have realised the distance between us, but he did not; he even claims that I am his, by right of a careless promise, carelessly given, threatening me with all sorts of horrors if I do not fulfil it."

"And you will not? Oh, Sybilla, how could you act so cruelly?"

"Well, my little Petsy, we are not all so exceedingly good as yourself. I wanted to be amused—he amused me; but now he bores me dreadfully. But, just to keep him quiet until I am properly settled I must reply to him; or will you do it for me? Our handwritings are not so very dissimilar."

"How dare you ask me to do such dishonourable work?" I cried, passionately. "Oh, Sybilla Varley, for all your beauty and your grace I would not change souls with you!"

She laughed, stretching out her arms above her head.

"Men love beauty; they like wives who do their judgment credit," she said. "I dare say you think I am 'a worthless woman—mere cold clay,' but, my friend, I play a winning game; I shall be young and fair still when you have fretted away your poor charms. It is a mistake to encourage one's feelings. There, I have read you my lesson; now, as you will not be obliging, I must write that poor, stupid Guy; pity he is poor and obscure, because he is really good form, and devoted to me."

She left me then, full of shame for her, pain for that unknown lover who was giving her of his best, and, half unconsciously, I quoted aloud,—

"I would not for her white and pink,

Though such he likes—her grace of limb,
Though such he has praised—nor yet, I think,
For life itself, though spent with him,
Commit such sacrifice—"

when Thorold's voice broke in,—

"What are you rehearsing, Miss Halifax? I

did not guess you were an embryo tragedienne. And where is Sybilla? I promised to drive her over to Truro; she prefers the dog cart, and, as I am not going to invite you to the back seat, I am afraid I shall see little of you to-day."

"I prefer remaining at home; Miss Marchmont may want me," I answered, frigidly. "I will tell Sybilla you are waiting."

He regarded me intently.

"Joyce, what has come to you? Why are you so disagreeable?" But I escaped with a great pain at my heart and eyes full of tears.

I loved him it was true, but I would die rather than let him guess this my most miserable secret. Oh! why had I come to Trefellan? I was happy enough at home, feeling neither hate nor envy; happy despite my poverty and many tasks; in our healthy lives we had no room for discontent or disagreements. But it seemed evident to me now that Thorold loved Sybilla. I could have borne that better had she been a better woman; but that he should give his heart's best devotion to her—that was hard.

I cannot tell how it happened, but he and I from this day began to drift asunder; only pride sustained me.

I played my part so well that I even deceived my godmother. Only at night, on my knees, or in my downy bed I gave vent to my passion and grief.

One morning I walked lonely in the paddock which adjoined the garden. I was wrapped in my own melancholy thoughts when a voice close by startled me.

"I beg pardon, but may I ask if you live at the Hall?" and veering round I confronted the handsomest man I had ever seen.

He was dark as a Spaniard, with great flashing black eyes, and before that look of misery settled upon his face must have been all but irresistible in his beauty. I answered briefly,—

"I am staying at the Hall with Miss Marchmont, my godmother."

"Then you are Miss Halifax, and I may entrust a message to you for Sybilla; you have a true face, and will deceive neither of us. Has she spoken of me? I am Guy Litchfield—her accepted suitor—although for certain reasons she will not acknowledge this fact to her relatives yet; and lately her letters have given me more pain than pleasure."

"I have heard of you," I answered, feeling a coward that I dare not tell him the bitter truth, "and I will help you if I can. Give me your message."

"You are very good; it is briefly this. That I must and will see her. Tell her I shall be waiting for her at this spot at four o'clock this afternoon. If she does not come I shall find my way to the Hall. Miss Halifax, I love her with my whole strength; but I cannot believe her wholly true; she has so often deceived me; yet such is the power she exercises over me that I am like wax in her hands. She has promised to be my wife when she comes into the fortune she tells me Miss Marchmont will bequeath her. But it is a dreadful thing to me this waiting for a dead woman's shoes. I cannot give her luxury, but at least I can provide her a comfortable home. I have a little money saved from my salary, and I would work, I would rise for her sake. Without her, life holds no good gift for me."

"Don't you think," I said, "that it would be wiser not to let her guess quite all she is to you? If she feared to lose you she might be more anxious to hold you."

"I cannot hide anything from her. If she fails me, why, then, I shall not care what other evil happens; neither shall I long endure my misery."

As he spoke I heard Sybilla's laugh in the distance, and looking towards the lawn saw her in company with Thorold. They had evidently sighted me and my companion, and in my confusion I did a very foolish thing. Turning to my companion I said,—

"Oh, go! go! I will be your messenger; but, indeed, you must leave me now," and without another word he went. I felt blind and giddy as I hurried to the gardens, over the level lawns; but in and through all I was conscious of an expression of cold disapproval on Thorold's face.

Sybilla, on the contrary, greeted me with a cheerful audacity that held me dumb.

"You sly little puss!" she exclaimed, "how cleverly you have hoodwinked us all. Why, we all imagined that neither love nor lovers disturbed your peace of mind."

"I want to tell you something," I stammered out, when she interrupted gaily,—*"Of course you do; and I am dying to receive your confidence. Mr. Dene, you will excuse us;"* and before I could protest she whisked me off the scene. The nearest reception-room was empty. Sybilla, dragging me in with her, said,—

"Now for your news!"

"You are a mean cruel wretch," I cried, beside myself with wrath; "you are trying to make me your scapegoat, and I will not allow it. You know that the man I met is your lover and not mine; but you try to degrade me in the eyes of others to further your own ends, whilst you torture the true heart of an honest gentleman. How can you do such evil deeds!"

"Tut! Tut!" said Sybilla, good-humouredly, "it is nothing. Men do not break their hearts for love, and Guy Litchfield must be taught his proper place. As for you, Joyce, take my advice: do not wear your heart so much upon your sleeve; it is easy to see that you aim at being Mrs. Dene, but it won't do, my dear, it really won't do, especially as the gentleman in question no longer admires you or confides in your rustic simplicity."

I stood staring at her like a dumb thing; she was so evil yet so beautiful, and I—oh! what could I do to thwart her wicked purposes!

Neither Miss Marchmont nor Thorold would have any faith in me now, thanks to Sybilla, and even as I stood, downcast and brooding, she laughed again.

"Exchange is no robbery, Joyce; I willingly forego all claim to Guy. You and he are most admirably suited to each other; why should you not make a match of it? I suppose I must see him this afternoon—Thorold is driving over to the Cauty's—you must acknowledge the fates are propitious—at least to me!"

Then I found my voice.

"You are a cowardly, traitorous woman. You have grossly insulted me, and from to-day we have nothing in common. Let me go; I hardly can breathe in your presence. Almost you make me ashamed of my sex," and as I fled the room her light laughter followed me.

In the evening, as I was going downstairs she tripped lightly after me.

"Don't you wish to hear the end of my adventure? or isn't curiosity one of your pet virtues?" she questioned. "Really, Joyce Halifax, you are a most uncommon young woman. I have seen Guy, and sent him away fairly happy by promising—that is almost promising—to marry him when my visit here ends."

"And you mean to do nothing of the kind? Oh, how can you be so cruel? Are not you afraid that you will drive him to madness? And he doesn't look like a man to be lightly trifled with; then (I forced myself to utter the words) Mr. Dene would not care to know that his future wife had played so very false a part."

"Thorold will not be enlightened; I shall manage affairs better than that; and when once we are really engaged I do not mind what he hears, because as a man of honour he won't be able to get away from his promise. You lack finesse my dear."

All that evening Thorold spent beside her, and I felt as though my very heart would break. Then, too, Miss Marchmont was less kind in her manner towards me; instinctively I felt that Sybilla had been playing tricks with my name to her, but I was far too proud to seek any explanation.

So matters went on from day to day. Thorold and I drifting farther and farther apart, until it came about that we scarcely exchanged words—never unless compelled.

Once only did my godmother speak of my supposed delinquency! With her hands upon my shoulders she said,—

"Cannot you confide in me, Joyce? Have you nothing to tell me? Who is this lover who cannot openly claim you? I stand now in your

mother's stead. Trust me as you would trust her."

"I have no lover, it is all a mistake," I began, when she loosed me, saying coldly,—

"I will not force your confidence; but do not lie to me, Joyce," and she proudly turned away.

CHAPTER IV.

It was early in December, and I had been out alone for a brisk walk; Sybilla and Thorold were somewhere skating, and I felt very disinclined for any company but my own; so that when Sir Cecil Manley joined me I was not in my most amiable mood.

Sybilla had often teased me on the subject of his attentions—always before Thorold—and had endeavoured to divert them to herself vainly; he remained loyal, and I was mean enough to feel some satisfaction in this, although I never gave him any encouragement, and was absolutely indifferent to him.

His position was superior to Thorold's, he was not ill-favoured, and his temper was amiable.

Now, as he held my hand a moment longer than I approved, he said,—

"You do not take kindly to our county, I fear; the roses are leaving your cheeks, and you are thinner than when you first came to us. I am inclined to feel affronted. I wanted you to like everything Cornish!"

"I do," I answered, not staying to choose my words; "all here have been so kind to me that my heart is warm towards them."

"Thank you; but in your affection there must be some degrees of difference. I should like to stand in the front rank of friends—to be something more than a friend to you."

The mischief was out.

Before I could stay him he was telling me how dearly he loved me, how fondly he would cherish me. He knew I was "a penniless lass," with no pedigree worth speaking about; but he was so humble and so earnest, I was so sore at heart, I so loved my dear ones, he was so willing and eager to help them that, for a while, I was wicked enough almost to yield to his entreaties. But the thought of Thorold kept me true to myself.

"It can never be," I said. "I like you very much—too much to wrong you. I cannot give you my love. I will not repay yours by accepting so much when I can give nothing in return."

He tried to combat my resolution; he would be content with so little; in time I should surely care for him, as he wished and prayed I might.

But I held firm. Thorold's face was before my eyes; Thorold's voice sounded in my ears.

"I am so sorry," I said, "not only for my own sake but for my people's. I wish I could have answered differently. As it is I can only say 'Forget me.'"

"As if I could!" he exclaimed, boyishly. "Oh, Joyce, how cruel you are."

Even as he spoke two persons passed us by. I recognised them through the gathering darkness, and Sybilla's voice was wafted towards me on the frosty air,—

"Our innocent little Joyce is a thorough-paced coquette."

I don't know to this day what Cecil thought of my conduct. I did not care then, as, blind with shame and pain, snatching my hand from his, I tore across the fields back to the Hall.

Why must I always appear in so false a light to Thorold? Why was Fate for ever arrayed against me?

Reaching my room I hastened to remove all signs of agitation before going down to dinner; but I knew I was unnaturally pale and I dreaded meeting Thorold.

The drawing-room was all ablaze with lights, and beside my godmother stood Sybilla, wearing an air of shyness which sat oddly upon her. Thorold was near them, and he at least did not brighten when Miss Marchmont said,—

"I have news for you, Joyce; I want your

congratulations for these two young people who have resolved to go through life together."

I stood like one thunderstruck, cold, breathless a moment, then I muttered something, I cannot remember what, but Sybilla kissed me as she said, softly,—

"Thank you, dear! I was sure you would be glad. You are too unselfish not to rejoice in another's joy!"

Then we all went in to dinner, and how the remainder of that evening passed I cannot tell.

I was free at last! Yes, free to toss to and fro upon my bed, to shed the bitterest tears that ever had risen from my heart to my eyes. I dared not moan lest I should be overheard. I could not sleep because of my anguish; but long before morning I had recovered something of my normal manner, for was not this a case in which woman's pride must play its part? Still it was a very pale Joyce who took her seat at the breakfast-table; and Sybilla, with the refinement of cruelty, remarked on my pallor and weariness.

Scarcely had the words passed her lips when a servant entered with a telegram for me. With the hope that through pressure of work mother had been obliged to recall me I tore it open. Then as I read the brief message my heart seemed to stand still, whilst the room went whirling round, and I could neither see nor hear anything save in a vague fashion.

"Come home at once! father is dying."

With a hoarse cry I started up.

"I must go! Oh! that I had never left them;" and my godmother put an arm about me with the old gesture of affection.

"My dear, tell me what has happened, then I shall know better how to help you."

"He is dying. Oh Heaven, my dear father! and I am here!"

I broke away from her then, rushing to the door up to my room. I would wait for nothing, my modest belongings could follow me. I only knew that time was fleeting, that I might not reach his side whilst life and memory remained to him. I was already dressed when my godmother joined me.

"My poor child, I dare not try to comfort you, it seems such a very mockery at such a time; but my heart aches for you and yours. I can only hope that his condition is less serious than is believed."

"Mother never would send such a message without cause," I answered miserably. I could not cry. All my previous trouble was swallowed up in this great calamity. "Good-bye! Some other day I will thank you for all your kindness; to-day I can think only of him."

"Poor child! poor child! and it is so hard to preach patience; but, dear, there is no train to Chatterley for three hours; even then you must drive to Truro to catch it; it does not stop here."

I was like one mad. I spoke wildly, foolishly, and she did not chide me; but when I paused for lack of breath she said,—

"If you leave the Hall in two hours you will have ample time to reach Truro; and Thorold will drive you himself. Come down with me; try to rest a little; for your mother's sake you must husband your strength."

I let her lead me down; but nowhere could I rest. Up and down, up and down I paced like a caged beast, not speaking or crying, but in silent revolt against Heaven's decree.

After what seemed an eternity Thorold helped me into the dog-cart. I was vaguely conscious that he was most kind and tender to me. Even Sybilla spoke words of pity. I believe she meant them, too; then we were off like the wind; yet Thorold could not drive fast enough for my aching, impatient heart.

After a long, long silence he began to speak such kindly words that I broke out,—

"Oh, don't! don't! if I listen to you I shall break down; I want to keep strong. Oh! if you guessed all my father is to me you would not wonder at my grief and impatience. He is the best, the dearest father on earth—is, I said; oh, great Heaven! perhaps even now I should say was."

"Don't look on the darkest side, Joyce; doc-

tors are not infallible. There may be hope yet; for your sake I trust it is so."

His voice was shaken with emotion; I dared not look at him as I made answer,—

"If he is taken away from us my mother's heart will break, she loves him so devotedly; and Eric is too young to be a support to her. Every hour, every day, she will miss his wisdom and strength, the kindness which never wavered or failed her. There will be no one to stand between her and the world but me—a weak, foolish girl."

"If you had been true, Joyce; no, at such a time as this I will not reproach you; but, my girl! my girl! if only you had loved me faithfully, I would have shielded not only you but those you hold dear from misery and poverty. Why would not you give me that right? Why did you find it so hard to be loyal?"

I think my great grief made me careless of all other things; I did not resent his judgment, I did not even care to be proud any more, as I said,—

"I was never false; appearances were against me; you were over-hasty; but I cannot talk of these things now—and you have Sybilla."

He drew his breath hard.

"Thank you for that reminder," and not another word was spoken until he was bidding me good-bye just before the train steamed out of the station. Then as he held my hand, he said,—

"Heaven bless you, dear, and restore your father to you. But, Joyce, if it is otherwise, and you need a friend, for the sake of our old happy days, remember to write me."

Then he was gone.

I will not linger over that terrible journey; but when I reached home I thought it strange that no one met me; it seemed to my morbid fancy that even the officials avoided me. Along the road I encountered three or four people, but they passed me with a formal greeting, whilst their eyes would not meet mine.

A great horror tore at my heart; lifting my skirts I ran the remainder of the way, never pausing till I reached the Rectory gates; then I ventured to lift my eyes—and oh! Heaven, the blinds were drawn, the shutters closed.

I sank like a log to the earth; dead! my kind, noble father! dead! and without one word or look for me. Face downward I lay, moaning like a stricken animal, when I felt myself lifted, heard a homely voice saying,—

"Oh, don't! don't! Miss Joyce, dear! It is too cruel to hear, and most breaks me down. Oh, lassie, think of your mother and her sore need and be brave."

With a wild effort I conquered myself sufficiently to stand without support, to meet the honest eyes of the village undertaker, all wet with tears (for everybody loved father) and under my breath I asked, "What was it? You may tell me now; I will not be a coward any more."

"Diphtheria, miss. He got it at Sally Restall's cottage. He went there to see her youngest son, and took it from him, eh! dear, dear! The lad's alive and mending, whilst the one we least can spare is taken."

Without a word I left him. Jane heard my step upon the gravel, and came to open the door.

"When?" I whispered.

"Just twenty minutes back, miss; oh! why couldn't you get here afore, with him a-calling so piteous like for you!"

I leaned against the wall; her reproach was unjust, but it cut me like a knife.

"I came as soon as I could," I began. "If I had known only last night—"

"Sure, miss, 'twas gone twelve before the mistress heard the truth—" and then I saw mother creeping downstairs, like one stricken with age; the next moment I was in her arms and we were crying together, as if our very hearts would break.

Even now I cannot bear to linger over that time; the hurried funeral, the awful silence and desolation of the house—that empty chair, which none other might ever fill—the sobs of the little ones, and mother's hopeless, sorrowful face.

When it was all over the trouble and loneliness were—but intensified. Mother and I sat by the desolate hearth scarcely speaking, until with a

sudden rush of tears she would fling out her arms before her, and hiding her face upon them, cry aloud,—

"Oh! my husband! oh, my husband!" in heart-rending tones.

It was well for me then that I must needs comfort her, or I had broken down completely.

Everybody was most good to us; the new Vicar had bidden us remain at the Vicarage until we could secure a suitable house. He was a rich man, and he was a good one, too.

Then as to live we must work, mother and I had much to think of and discuss; so that it was necessary we should, as far as possible, stifle our grief, and face the unknown future.

CHAPTER V.

Eric's employer, who was the one chemist Chatterley boasted, kindly offered to take him wholly into his house, and as his salary was just sufficient for his modest needs mother was relieved of one responsibility.

He also generously received Charlie (my next brother) as apprentice without asking a premium. It was difficult to know what to do for Lois, who came between the boys, and was now sixteen; but that difficulty was solved for us by Miss Marchmont, who, in the kindest of letters said, "Let me have the child; I understand she is clever, and she can pursue her studies here under the supervision of able masters. At the close of two years you will be able to place her out as governess. I ask the loan of your child, dear Milly, because when Thorold and Sybilla are married I shall be left desolate, as they are not to make their home with me. Please use enclosed cheque for anything she may require."

So we parted from Lois with tears and kisses. Now there remained the two children for whom to make provision. After much thought we decided to move to Chatterley, and having secured a comfortable residence, I commenced keeping school, whilst mother determined to take boarders. The idea was not pleasant to us; but one cannot always have what one likes, and so we made the best of it. At the close of three months I had quite a nice little school, whilst mother and Jane found enough to do in attending to the wants of the three boarders. We all worked hard, but no one complained; only for the ever-increasing sense of loss, the secret sorrow which passing time but intensified, I should have been a happy girl. But in the long nights I lay wakeful, thinking of my bonny lover, the bitter mistake each had made, which bade fair to wreck not only my life but his—and then the tears would come. He and Sybilla were to be married at the close of June, and at St. George's, she insisting that she must spend three weeks in town before the ceremony. Lois wrote often, the burden of her letters being "I don't care if I am wicked. I will tell the truth, which is, that I hate Sybilla Varley; she is mean and deceitful, not nearly good enough for that darling Thorold, whom I love only a little less than my dear Miss Marchmont." Once she wrote, "I am to be a bridesmaid.—How I wish you were the bride; you are just the sort of girl Thorold should have chosen, and I cannot understand why he preferred Sybilla, for I am confident he does not care for her. When I speak of you he listens with such a sad expression in his eyes that I feel he is regretting he set Sybilla first. Even Miss Marchmont is beginning to find her out."

I hid my face in my hands, crying a little then over my blighted hopes, but more for the misery I feared was in store for Thorold. It was so hard to think that pride and jealousy had wrought such havoc for us both; the more I brooded upon this the more terrible it appeared to be; but I could do nothing; he was bound hand and foot. My work grew harder to me. I began to lose colour and strength, until in June I was actually ill. Fortunately the holidays had begun, and I could rest; but in her alarm mother wrote Miss Marchmont, saying how anxious my condition made her. A reply quickly followed, which contained a cordial invite to me. A long time I held out; but what with my sister's entreaties,

and mother's reproaches, I was forced to yield—with a very bad grace. Sybilla was in town, whither Thorold had followed her to make some final arrangements, but he was to return to Trefellan for that last week of freedom. I found Lois much grown and improved, just as affectionate, though, as ever, and nothing could exceed my godmother's kindness. She was startled by my appearance; taking my face between her hands she said, "What have you done with yourself, child? Your mother told me you were ill, she never prepared me for so great a change." Her eyes filled with tears. "This is not the Joyce I used to know."

"I have seen so much trouble since we parted, and have been very ill; the fortnight's rest will set me up again," I answered, trying hard to look cheerful.

Then Lois joined us in company with Sir Cecil, with whom she was quarrelling in a very robust fashion. He was rather embarrassed when he saw me. I think, too, that he was wondering how he could once have dreamed he loved me, I had grown so old and grave.

"Those two," remarked my godmother, "are always disagreeing, and always patching up their queer friendship; the more they quarrel the happier they are. Suppose, Joyce, we leave them to their own devices."

So we went in together. In the dusky drawing-room, Miss Marchmont, fondling my hands, said,—

"My dear, oh, my dear I there has been a huge mistake somewhere; now it is too late to rectify it. I feel in some way we have wronged you, but you never spoke, and so the evil was done. My poor boy, Thorold, is wretched, Sybilla plainly triumphant, and as plainly indifferent to him—yet they are to be married. Why did you not make me your confidante?"

"I had nothing to tell you," I answered, wretchedly; "from the time Sybilla came amongst us I thought that both you and Mr. Dene preferred her to me; it was natural; she had everything I lacked—but it was hard. I will not speak against her when she is not near to defend herself. I will not speak against her at all, because she is to be his wife; under his guidance she must grow more like to him—only—only—I was never the heartless flirt you believed me. I never loved or pretended to love any man but—Thorold;" then I hid my shame-stricken face in her skirts; and we kept long silence; neither in the days that followed did we again broach the subject.

A week later Thorold returned; I had schooled myself to meet him calmly, and only the most common-place speech passed between us. He certainly had not the appearance of a happy lover, being weary in manner, haggard in looks, and of Sybilla he rarely spoke.

The week wore by; it wanted now but twenty-four hours to his marriage; at twelve A.M. my godmother, Lois, and he were to travel townwards, I, homewards, for nothing would induce me to be present at the ceremony.

Lois had been running about the gardens gathering flowers, but we had lost eight of her lithe, tall figure for awhile, when presently she rushed towards the house.

"Oh, Thorold, do come; there was a man just beyond the gardens—lying in the paddock. He so frightened me with his white face and wild eyes, though he spoke like a gentleman. He asked me where was Miss Varley; I said in town. Then he caught me by the wrist, crying, 'Do not lie to me; she is here. Tomorrow is her wedding day—tell her Guy Litchfield is waiting for her—she must see the fruit of her labour before she goes to a life all luxury and ease.'"

"I said, 'I cannot take your message; she is in town.' Then I twined my wrists out of his hold, running away. When I looked back he was lying in the long grass with his face hidden. I think he—will do some harm to himself—he looked so wild."

Thorold interrupted her.

"Is he, tall, more than well-favoured, very dark?"

"Yes; until he spoke I thought he was a foreigner."

"Was not the message for you, Joyce?" he

asked. "He answers the description of a man I once saw with you."

"That was the only time I ever met Guy Litchfield. If you would hear the truth you must question Miss Varley; I have nothing to tell you."

He regarded me keenly a moment, then left us hastily; going in search of Guy Litchfield, but he did not succeed in finding him; for which I was devoutly thankful; and by twelve we had gone our separate ways. The next part of my story I learned from Lois, Miss Marchmont, and the dreadful newspaper reports; and I tell them just as they occurred.

The following morning the bridal party assembled at the church; the bridegroom, pale and stern, waiting for Sybilla's coming. He had had an interview with her on the previous night of a stormy character, he upbraiding her with her falsehood; she boldly declaring that Guy Litchfield was nothing but a presumptuous young man, who had construed her condescension into a passion for himself, and that she would not be made ridiculous before the eyes of her friends by his (Thorold's) renunciation of her.

At last the carriage containing the bride and her father drove up to the church. A great crowd had gathered about the doors to look at the lovely dresses and the fair wearers.

It was rumoured the bride was especially beautiful, so that many pressed forward to see her. Amongst the crowd was a young man, whose haggard handsome face and melancholy bearing had attracted much attention. He was dressed in careless, even slovenly fashion, but as the bride stepped out of her carriage he, pressing forward, reached her side. Putting out his hand he touched her dainty gown. Some cried he was mad, others that he was drunk. She, recoiling somewhat, drew her skirts close, and would have passed him by contemptuously, when he said,—

"Sybilla! Sybilla! will you go through with this devilish deed, and have my blood upon your head?"

As she halted, white as the stainless robes she wore, a policeman broke through the crowd.

"Move on," he said, "or I shall arrest you."

The young man laughed, still standing in the bride's way. Then, before one could speak or move, he suddenly drew out a razor, passing it rapidly across his throat, and as he fell, he said,—

"I have—not—hurt—her—but Heaven—will require—my soul—of her."

They were his last words; he died uttering them; and the bride shrieking terribly, fell into her father's arms, her white robes all bespattered with his blood.

The bridal party, hearing so awful a commotion, rushed out, to find her in violent hysterics, with weeping women and shuddering men gathered about the prostrate form, which but a few moments ago was instinct with life and passion.

There was no wedding that day; for the first time in her strong, selfish life Sybilla was really ill. When she recovered sufficiently to discuss matters, she resolutely refused to release Thorold, knowing well that Guy's statement of facts, coupled with the packet of her letters (found upon him) had considerably damaged her chances of settlement.

There was yet another shock for her. When she had risen from her bed of sickness a woman, old and broken before her time, forced her way into Sybilla's presence. She was Guy Litchfield's mother, and she spoke such bitter truths, in such unmeasured language, that the spoiled beauty, the heartless coquette, cowered before her, not daring to reply. The excitement caused a relapse, so that when once more she was able to leave her room Thorold was well away on an expedition to the North Pole. But he had left this message behind:—

"Had you but a woman's heart you would release me from a promise so bitterly repented as mine; but as you hold me to it, I will return to fulfil it in the course of a year. Only when I meet you at the altar it is for the last time; where we meet we will part, for with my whole heart I loathe you; I can never look on your face again but to remember its in all its ghastly horror; but you shall have that for which you

have bartered your soul; whilst I will go my way to work for bread which shall be sweeter than it is not broken in your presence."

Oh! it was horrible! horrible! Miss Marchmont, broken and ill, closed the Hall for awhile, coming to us; and Sybilla, well, in a short time she recovered her mental and physical tone, and we heard she had gone voyaging; but of Thorold we heard nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

THE winter months had come again; it was now December, and very near to Christmas; Lois would return to spend it with us, whilst Miss Marchmont went to some friends at Bournemouth.

We looked forward dimly to the next few months, for Charlie was ill, mother's boarders were gone, and, owing to the great prevalence of measles in the district, my school was but thinly attended.

These matters stood, when mother received a letter from Sybilla asking if she had any vacancies, protesting that she was ill and longed for quiet. Mother looked at me, aghast, then said,—

"We want money so badly, Joyce; if you could only endure this girl's presence, things would be easier for us; she does not come alone, her father accompanies her, and you need not see much of her."

It was wicked, I know, but I hated to meet her; I could not forget Thorold, neither could I erase Guy Litchfield from my memory. But beggars cannot be choosers, so I said,—

"Oh, let them come; but this visit means mischief; Sybilla isn't the girl to bury herself at a place like Chatterley without some strong motive."

Mother reproved me for my uncharitable speech; but I only laughed, not being convinced; then I said,—

"It is not necessary I should see Sybilla at all. I will have my meals in the kitchen with Jane."

"But Joyce —"

"Mother, let me have my way in this. I wish never to see her again; and—of course it is foolish pride—but I do not feel as if I could meet her save on an equal footing." And I had my way.

Duly Sybilla and Captain Varley arrived. I could well imagine how attractive he had been to my godmother in those far back days, for at this time he was still a very handsome man, of splendid presence and debonaire manner. Even I could not fail to like him for his uniform courtesy to mother; and if he met me upon the stairs he had always a pleasant greeting for me.

He and Sybilla went out a great deal, although we neither knew nor cared whom they visited. She had not so much as inquired for me, apparently having forgotten my existence.

But she was very kind and friendly to Eric, so that I took alarm, saying,—

"She is without conscience and without mercy; she would add that boy to her long list of victims. She is so beautiful, so unscrupulous."

Then Eric, coming in, overheard my words, and laughed boisterously as he laid his hands upon my shoulders.

"Joyce, you are careful, and troubled over many things without cause; already I see indications of wrinkles on your brow, suspicions of grey hairs among the dark locks! But, my dear old girl, you need not fear for me. Miss Varley is just a trifle too 'sugary' for my taste; and if she thinks to catch 'a country heart for pasture' ere she goes to town she must use different bait! Why, Joyce, with such good women as mother and you always before me is it feasible I should decline on a girl like that? There is nothing real about her except her beauty;" and he spoke with such manifest good faith that I was not only relieved but satisfied.

Then Lois returned; she had grown quite womanly and really pretty, but she had lost nothing of her old directness and honesty of speech.

When she heard that Sybilla was under our roof she first waxed wrath, then laughed so long and heartily that we could only join in her merriment.

"Oh! she is a beast, but such a clever one!" she began, when she could get her breath. "Now, mother, don't scold, I am only telling truth. Miss Marchmont is awfully mad over her engagement to Thorold; devoutly prays it will end in smoke. It won't be Sybilla's fault if ever she is plain Mrs. Dene."

"Lois, you must not talk scandal; and we know that Miss Varley has refused to release her lover."

"Yes, mother; but she would be quite willing to lose him altogether if a better port came along. She is afraid of Thorold, and she would hate to have a husband who was not always at her beck and call. There! I don't look so surprised, you cannot expect to keep us babies always, mother dear, and I was always precocious. Now, let me ask you one thing: isn't Dullerton Court being prepared for the Duke's return?"

"Yes; but this is irrelevant."

"Wrong, my dear mamma. The mighty Dullerton expressed a feeble admiration for Miss Sybilla Varley when he met her at Boulogne, so when Captain Varley heard he intended coming over to England he brought his daughter back, that she might be here to give him greeting."

"Lois! Lois! you have been listening to ill-natured gossip, and the Duke is seventy, if he is a day."

"He is seventy-two," responded this awful young lady, "and he is little and ugly; he wears corsets and tight shoes, also he paints and powders, whilst his wife is triumphs of art. He is a bad old man, so I hope Sybilla will be successful, then perhaps he will make her suffer as she made that poor Guy Litchfield. I cannot help being wicked, if it is wicked to hate such women and their ways. It is of no use talking to me, mother. I'm not like you or Joyce."

Hardly had she ceased speaking when Sybilla's voice from the stairs said,—

"May I come in Mrs. Halifax, just for a friendly chat?"

In an instant Lois had sprung to the open door.

"No, Miss Varley; unfortunately the kitchen and her bedroom are the only places of refuge my mother has. If we permitted boarders to invade them—"

"I addressed Mrs. Halifax," Sybilla began, haughtily, when that irrepressible child interrupted, "And I answer for her," with which speech she shut the door violently upon Sybilla.

It was vain for mother to remonstrate; she only sat laughing until the tears rolled down her cheeks, saying between ripples of merriment,—

"I have—snubbed—an embryo—duchess—what an awful sin! Oh! Joyce, how dearly Sybilla will love me from to-day."

Not one word did Miss Varley utter with regard to her rudeness; but the following morning she told mother that she was dining that night at Dullerton Court, adding that "Joyce had always a talent for hair dressing, would she give her some help that evening?"

Even mother's gentle spirit was roused by that, so that she answered,—

"I was not a lady's maid, but a governess—a gentlewoman by birth, although my fortune was so poor." I think Sybilla was surprised.

About eight, however, she came slowly downstairs in all the bravery of white and gold draperies.

Lois, leaning over the balustrade, whispered that she was lovely in her "war-paint," and hoped for Thorold's sake she might be successful, "because he deserved a better fate than to marry the murderess of Guy Litchfield."

Christmas had scarcely passed when Chatterley was all agog with the news that the Duke of Dullerton was about to espouse Miss Sybilla Varley. Those who did not know her story pitied her, because he had earned for himself a dreadful reputation. He had married long ago a pure, good girl, had broken her heart by his violence and profligacy, and when she died of her sorrows he had insulted her memory in every conceivable

way. Such was the man Sybilla would marry, and even I, who had no cause to love her, would have done much to save her from the misery I believed she was working out for herself. Two days after her betrothal I met her lover upon the stairs; perhaps he mistook me for a superior maid; however that may be, he leered at me odiously, making a feint of kissing me. I lost my temper, and struck him sharply across the cheek, almost sending him down, for he was feeble at the knees; then, without waiting to see if I had really hurt him, I ran up to Sybilla.

She sat twisting a splendid diamond ring about her slender finger, and gave me but the briefest, haughtiest greeting. I was not to be repulsed, however.

"Sybilla," I said, "we have not met since those days at Trefellan, we are not likely to meet again, and we never have been friends; but for your own sake I must speak to you. Oh, consider, my dear, consider what you are doing. Remember that the step you are about to take is irrevocable; when once you are that man's wife there is neither hope nor help for you—and Dullerton is a terrible creature."

"He is rich, has a title," she answered with cold contempt. "I ask no more."

"But Thorold—oh, think, Sybilla!"

"Miss Varley, if you please." Then, suddenly, she broke into passion. "He never loved me. He preferred that poor face of yours. Your rusticity was charming to him; but I won him from you; it was such an easy thing to do. I think I even liked him a little, until he showed me how from his heart he loathed me. Then I vowed I would keep him, having won him. I never looked for such a chance as this. I meant that he should suffer for his contempt of me; so he will, but in a less degree. I am not a woman who, to use a convenient vulgarism, would cut off her nose to spite her face, and so I take Dullerton, making Thorold Dene ridiculous in the eyes of his world as he made me in mine. Joyce Halifax, you are just a trifle too good and simple for this world. Follow my example, if you can. I expect little from man, so I take Dullerton with his years, his follies, his iniquities upon his head; but I take him with open eyes, and because of his riches. You, poor fool, have idealised the man you love."

"An error into which you will never fall," I retorted, as angry as she; "but the day must come when you will regret your choice. When your beauty has left you, your lovers and friends grown cold, you will wish with your whole heart that you had made a different decision. Sybilla, Miss Varley, remember Guy Litchfield!" She rose suddenly, thrusting me away from her violently.

"How dare you speak of him to me!" she cried. "How dare you remind me of his madness!" and her face was as white as snow. "It makes me ill to think of him; but, but he was mad. The fault was not mine. Now go away; no, I did not mean that; stay with me, I—I am unnerved;" but I would not hear her, only as I quitted the room I saw her cast a shuddering glance behind her, then fall sobbing into a chair. After that I did not see her for many months.

She left our house next day for Dullerton Court. A little later she was married, and went abroad for the honeymoon, whilst Miss Marchmont wrote bidding Thorold return; but the weeks went by without bringing any news of him; and my heart was sick with a great dread.

In March we read that Sybilla was back in town, that her beauty and her diamonds made a great stir. Her photo was in every window, her name on every tongue.

We heard, too, that the Duke was devoted to her—it is queer how men will love these loveless women—he who had been a very fiend to his angel-wife was tenderness itself to one who could not understand tenderness.

I need to wonder if she had forgotten poor Guy; if ever he haunted her dreams. I have reason to believe that in the zenith of her beauty and prosperity she remembered him not at all. And still there came no news of Thorold; oh, love of my life! these were heavy bitter days to me.

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS wicked enough to envy Sybilla, because all things good seemed to fall to her share; but before that first brilliant season was ended, much as I disliked, I pitied her intensely. It chanced one morning, that as she sat idling over her breakfast, a servant told her a woman asked to see her, and would not be denied.

Sybilla was not one to be coerced, or to go a little out of the way to oblige another, but on this particular morning she was idle, and a faint curiosity stirred her, so that she bade the man usher in her unknown visitor. As she turned her beautiful eyes upon the new-comer she saw only a slight figure, decently but poorly clad; and the hair, which just showed below the thick disguising veil, was grey.

"What is it you want?" she asked indifferently; "why could you not send in your message?"

"Because I wished to see you face to face—the woman who slew my boy," and with those words she flung back her veil, revealing the features of Guy Litchfield's mother.

Sybilla cried out sharply, putting out her hand to touch the bell, but Mrs. Litchfield was too quick for her; she caught and held the slender fingers in a firm grasp.

"I will not go until you have heard and granted my petition. Oh! that I must ever beg a boon of my boy's murderers. Listen to me! He lies buried in a suicide's grave. Only you and I know that he was mad. You and I will remember that for all its snowiness, this little hand is stained with blood in the sight of Heaven. I hate you, hate you—with all my soul, and yet I come to you for help—it is blood money."

"For mercy's sake tell me what you want, and go," cried Sybilla, beside herself with fear.

"I am coming to that. Guy was our hope and pride; he was so clever we expected great things of him; he was so dutiful, so good, that his joy was to repay us for the sacrifices we had made in order that he should follow his own bent. Yearly he put aside a part of his income for our sole use. We were not well to do people, and his father's health was indifferent. Thanks to Guy we knew no want. Then you entered his life; and your beauty was his bane. He never changed to us—my darling boy; but I saw the light fading from his eyes, I heard the ring of misery and despair in the voice that used to be so gay; and I cursed you. Then came the end; it almost killed me. I wonder how you can remember it and live. But such women as you have neither heart nor conscience, and yet good fortune remains with you. From the day when my boy fell dead at your feet my husband has been failing mentally as well as physically, and I could not procure him either good advice or those luxuries he so sorely needed. Now I have come to you from his deathbed. Ah! you do not like to think of death"—as Sybilla shrank back, "to demand a little from your great store to bury him. I will move Heaven and earth rather than he shall lie in a pauper's grave."

"You shall have what you need," the other answered with shaking lips. "I will write you a cheque—and—and I am very sorry for you. If I can help you at any future time I will; only I would rather you applied to me by letter."

Mrs. Litchfield smiled grimly.

"I can understand how little you wish to see me," she said, taking the cheque without a word of thanks; it was for twenty pounds, a large sum to her, a small one to Sybilla. Then they stood confronting each other, the beautiful young duchess, the haggard poverty-stricken widow—could there have been a greater contrast?

Sybilla spoke,—

"You will excuse me now, as I have several important engagements; please remember my instructions; and—and I wish you fortune in the trial before you. When is the funeral to be?"

"To-morrow, your Grace. You see my husband died of an infectious disease, and I may not keep him longer,"—there were no tears in her

stony eyes; she spoke with the calm of a vast despair.

"Infectious!" cried Sybilla, angrily, "why did you not tell me so before! How dare you approach me! Of what did he die?"

"Small-pox; it is not uncommon in poor parts of the city."

With a shriek the Duchess rushed past her; she had a morbid horror of this terrible plague; she could not bear to hear it spoken of, and she had been in close contact with a woman who had just come from nursing one of its victims!

Uptairs she fled—Mrs. Litchfield letting herself out—she tore off her dainty morning gown, bidding her maid burn every article she had worn, giving incoherent orders for fumigating the breakfast-room, and the free use of disinfectants.

But alas! alas for Sybilla, every precaution was vain; her very fright increased her danger ten-fold.

The next day she woke with a racking headache, an intolerable thirst. Presently it became known that the beautiful Duchess of Dullerton was lying low with small-pox, and her fashionable friends avoided the plague-stricken house.

The Duke himself fled, and but for the bravery of the trained nurses she must have died, and died alone.

It was near the close of July before she could be moved, and before it was considered safe to visit her; then she came down to Dullerton Court, but the curious did not see her face, she was so heavily veiled. She sent for me the following day, and despite mother's fears and my own dislike of her, I responded to her invitation. I was so grieved to think that her wonderful beauty was spoiled, most probably for ever.

I found her sitting alone in her darkened boudoir; as I entered she slowly turned her head, and such a change as I saw in her I pray I may never see in any other.

Her beauty was wholly destroyed; the scanty locks about her brow had lost all lustre, her eyes alone retained their loveliness, but they looked out from such a terribly disfigured face with such a terribly despairing expression that one could scarcely bear to meet them.

I burst into tears, it was so cruel to see her thus; no more terrible fate could have befallen her. She, stretching out her arms before her, hid her face upon them, moaning—

"Then it is as awful as I feared. The nurses told me I might never hope to regain my beauty. Joyce! Joyce Halifax—you and—and all those I ever wronged are amply avenged. But you are not glad! Strange that you should care. Oh! I wish they had left me to die; better death a thousand times than this awful thing. My friends have forsaken me; my father dare not yet come near me; and His Grace (this with sudden contempt) has flown. I have seen him once since my recovery; he was more startled than you; he cried out 'Great Heaven! what a monster!' I have lost my one possession, my beauty. I was so proud of it, I delighted in it as a strong man delights in his strength—and it is gone. If I were a braver woman I would make my own quietus, but I dare not. Joyce, help me! tell me how to bear my heavy cross."

I went and knelt beside her, poor unhappy soul, and in my foolish fashion tried to comfort her, but all that I said seemed only to increase her misery and despair.

Little by little, sobbing and shuddering, she told me the whole story of her interview with Mrs. Litchfield, adding passionately, "She had better have plunged a knife into my heart than have done me this ill. What had I done that she should strike me so cruelly! Could I help it if my loveliness drove her son mad! Was I worse than any other girl who whiles away an idle week or two with an idle flirtation! Yet see how awfully I am punished! It is unjust, diabolical! Oh! starting up, "if I could but find that woman what revenge I would take upon her! Joyce, tell me what to do."

I had no suggestion to make; she was so terrible in her impotent rage and vindictiveness that she frightened me. This was a new Sybilla, and I shrank from her.

Perhaps she read something of this in my face, for with a sudden change of mood she laughed.

"There! don't heed what I have said; I shall be better now that I have unburdened my mind to you, and I know you will repeat nothing I have said. We will be good friends you and I, little Joyce, until Thorold Dene returns to separate us, then, of course, I must best a retreat—he would not tolerate me. By the way, tell me the latest news of him."

"I have nothing to tell, Sybilla; the *Crocodile* has not been heard of for months. Some of Miss Marchmont's letters have been returned to her, others are travelling from one outlandish place to another. I suppose they are despatched with the vain hope of one day reaching Mr. Dene. But great fears are entertained—and—and—a search expedition is being organised."

Her great eyes lit up with sudden fire.

"Then your engagement is not at all an assured thing! Poor Joyce! After all I am not the only unfortunate woman in the world," and again she laughed in the old dreadful mocking way. But when she saw I was not only hurt but offended, she put an arm about me saying—

"Don't be angry with me. I am not really vicious, but my calamity has made me capricious and horrid altogether; really, Joyce, I like you better than I have ever liked any creature, save myself. Sit down again, I want to talk of old times."

And it was late before I left her, with my heart full of pity—she had been so proud of her new name; now folks could never call her the beautiful duchess any more, and that in itself was hard, because only by her grace and beauty had she won hearts to herself. But worse than all was this one fact, not all her wrong-doing had taught her repentance, not all her trouble had softened her.

It was a terrible shock to me when one day she said, "I have been hunting for Mrs. Litchfield—rather my agents have. I cannot quite tell how I meant to punish her, but punish her I would. I swore to that. To-day I have received proof of her death; when she left me she sickened and died of this accursed thing" (touching the scars which so disfigured her). "She has escaped me after all, and has left me an object for pity or scorn all my life. Once Joyce Halifax you were as a star to the sun, when compared with me. Now, no man in his senses would look twice at me when you are by. Oh! flinging out her arms, "what would I not give to have so unmarried a face as yours. If I had but once more been confronted with that woman—I think—I think I should have killed her."

And in all the time I knew her after her attitude towards the dead mother never altered; hate and rage filled her heart; she shrank from contact with those she had once entertained, and her not naturally sweet disposition became so much embittered that few would venture near her unless compelled by the usages of polite society, or induced to do so by charitable instincts. In October she left Dullerton Court, travelling only with her maid. All her lovers and admirers had forsaken her, and His Grace was said to have protested with a shudder, "I cannot look on that horror. I was a fool to marry a woman who had nothing but the fleeting quality of beauty to recommend her," for with her vanished loveliness his frail love vanished too, so that I cannot imagine a much more wretched state than Sybilla's.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONCE more Christmas was approaching, and Lois was with us; but she did not come alone. My godmother had written some weeks back, saying—

"Dear Milly, keep your rooms empty, as this Christmas I intend spending with you. Lois has secured an excellent situation, and I want to talk matters over with you."

We were, of course, all very much excited; everybody helped to get Miss Marchmont's rooms ready, and such a laughing and crying had not been heard in the place for generations, I am sure, as when Lois ran into the hall to kiss and be

kissed in rapturous fashion. She had grown into such a pretty young woman I regarded her with amazement; she was so full of life and fun that we were all the brighter for contact with her. But it was not until we sat at table that we noticed something quite fresh about her; then suddenly mother, leaning forward, laid her gentle hand upon the finger which was adorned by a glittering ring saying, "My child, what does this mean?"

Lois laughed, blushed, grew nervous, then stammered out—

"It means that I am engaged, mother dear; but—but—Miss Marchmont will tell you all about it," and she subsided into silence. But my godmother said, "Pray be at rest, Milly; Lois is the luckiest of girls; I suppose I ought to have communicated with you, asking your consent; but as we were coming down so soon I thought it hardly necessary; and your future son-in-law is all that can be desired. You will see him to-morrow, as he is following us here just to make your acquaintance and ask you formally for Lois."

"I—I thought," said mother, "you spoke of a situation she had secured."

"Well—yes; really a pleasant one, too—that of wife to Sir Cecil Manley."

I sprang up. "Oh Lois! I am glad! he is good and kind."

"Then you aren't jealous," she answered, laughing and hiding her face on my shoulder. "That is generous of you, because some times I have envied your place in his regard."

"It was only a passing fancy," I answered, "and you know that I had never anything better than friendship to give him; but there isn't another man I would so gladly see you marry."

Then, of course, mother kissed and cried over her, until Miss Marchmont said we had talked quite enough about the matter, and that she had something else of importance to tell us. Lois caught my hand, exclaiming—

"Joyce! oh, you darling old Joyce," and my heart began to throb wildly, because instinctively I felt I was to hear news of Thorold.

I was not mistaken; presently my godmother was telling us how good Sir Cecil had been in hunting up news of the *Crocodile*; and how, thanks to him, the new expedition had been started. He confidently declared that before another summer came he would again be with us, and she added—

"Heaven only knows how I long once more to clasp my boy to my heart. When that good time arrives, may I hope, Joyce, that you will share the home of one who has learned to know your worth, to value you for your loyalty!"

I glanced at mother; Miss Marchmont saw and rightly interpreted that glance; touching me gently she said—

"There will always be a corner in the house for her; you need not fear for her future," and not one word of thanks would she hear. No more generous woman than Miss Marchmont ever lived.

We spent a very happy day together; and on the morrow Sir Cecil joined us; he was so frank and free I could not feel embarrassed; he dropped so naturally into the position of brother, was so devoted to our Lois, that we could not fail to love him.

Brie and he were fast friends at the briefest notice; he had words of comfort for me, was so kind to our poor ailing Charlie, that when he suggested an early wedding no one said him nay. So they were married very quietly when the New Year was young indeed. It seemed strange to think of that child, Lois, as a wife, but she went to him with perfect love and trust.

"You used to quarrel dreadfully," my godmother said, as she kissed the bride's blushing face; "it is so odd that you should end your storms thus."

Lois laughed.

"Shall I explain the riddle! From the first I was a wee bit fond of Cecil, but I thought he liked Joyce best, so I snubbed him; he, on the other hand, believed I hated him, and behaved badly to me. Of course he will have to pay the piper now;" but ah! the look she gave him lent another meaning to her words.

Well, they were off at last; on their return Doreen was to go with them, Cecil undertaking to defray all expenses; and mother, Charlie, Ethel, and I were left alone. Then Charlie began to grow weaker with each passing day, waking to life and animation only when the night drew near. We wished to send for Lois, but he would not listen to this proposal.

"I shall last until she returns," he said; "do not spoil her good time, mother, dear;" and what could we do but obey? As it was she reached home just in time to say good-bye, to satisfy our boy's loving heart. Then he left us; when I saw mother's face I felt that for her the struggle would endure but for a night, and wept as though my heart would break.

We buried him with father. Doreen went away with Cecil and Lois; Ethel with my godmother; so that we two remained alone, for even Eric was gone, Miss Marchmont having charged herself with the expenses of a medical career.

"He is too clever to remain a chemist," she said, "and—if—if Thorold never returns, there is no one who has a claim upon me. Milly, let me have my own way, and do not spoil the boy's life by false pride."

Summer was with us again; the holidays were drawing near, and I was thinking relievedly that soon mother and I would be able to go down to Trefellan; she wanted a rest sorely, and I, too, was very weary. We were to make our home with Cecil, who, indeed, could not sufficiently show his affection to his wife's friends.

It was pleasant to bowl along the old familiar road, with Cecil for our Jehu, Lois and Doreen chatting like a pair of magpies. Of course we stayed at the Hall, picking up Ethel and my godmother, who under cover of the chatter said,—

"Joyce, I have news for you; the survivors of the *Crocodile*, crew and passengers, are on their homeward way—and Thorold is amongst them." I sat stunned and breathless; although the day was hot, I felt white and cold; my godmother cried out in alarm, and Cecil from his seat on the box implored me not to faint. I heard him in a vague way; I felt mother's arms about me, then a far away voice saying, "Let her be; joy does not kill—she will be all right presently." And so ashamed was I of my weakness that by a greater effort of will than I supposed myself capable I sat erect, even answering their anxious inquiries in a tolerably composed voice. But all the while my heart was throbbing madly to the refrain, "He is coming! coming! I shall see him once again! Oh, Heaven is good—is good!"

They were quiet days that followed when I waited for my lover in the sickness of hope long deferred. Scarcely any words of passion had passed between us, yet I never doubted that I was dear to him, that time or chance could not change his heart. If all others were false Thorold must be true, for he was not like other men.

It was in July when he returned; we had not received any message from him, so that we were wholly at a loss when to expect him. I had not been very well for a day or two, so I did not join the party bound for the Hall, but remained by myself. I made a pretence of dining, then went into the big, old-fashioned drawing-room, where the shadows had already begun to fall.

I felt restless, tired a little of my own society, so that at last I rose, and going to the piano struck the opening notes of a dreamy air which my godmother had composed as a setting for some words of Christina Rossetti's. I played through the first verse, then I began softly to sing the second.

"Alas! that we must dwell, my heart and I,
So far asunder,
Hours wax to days, and days and days creep by;
I watch with wistful eye,
I wait and wonder;
When will that day draw nigh—that hour draw nigh?"

I started with a cry when some one said, "A gentleman to see you, miss," furtively wiping away the tears that had risen to my eyes, because there was just light enough left for them to be discernible.

The next instant my visitor and I were alone.

I stole a glance at him; he was haggard and gaunt; he had grown quite a heavy beard, and he looked dreadfully ill; but oh! thank Heaven! thank Heaven! it was my Thorold I saw, and his eyes were full of love.

"Joyce," he said, in those low deep tones I knew so well, "Joyce," and he stretched out his arms to me.

I ran to their dear shelter. I did not so much as remember to be shy in my great gladness, and when his lips met mine, I frankly returned their caress—he was as a beloved one risen from the dead, for many a time I had feared never to look on his face again.

When we had grown just a wee bit used to our happiness he drew me down upon a couch before a window asking,—

"And you love me still—you have loved me all along!"

"Always—from first to last—only you distrusted me, and I believed Sybilla had taken your heart from me. How foolish we each were!"

"How could you dream I should love Sybilla when you were by? I was a mad fool to rush into an engagement with her; but, thank Heaven! she set me free by her own act. I suppose she is a queen of society now?"

"Oh, no; poor Sybilla!" I said. Then I told him all that had befallen her.

He was grieved and shocked; but, with man's stern judgment, said,—

"She deserved her reward. I never can forget that poor fellow and his face as he raised it to utter his last words, 'She is a demon!'"

Then we talked of other and more personal matters. Thorold had so much to tell. He had been through trials sore, and had narrowly escaped with his life. He had suffered privation, cold, and sickness.

"But," he said, "I never could have returned to Sybilla. I prayed that death might find me out before the close of the year. Oh, my darling,—my little darling! had I but known what joy awaited me, how cruel every hour of waiting would have been! Now, if you are not quite too much ashamed of my appearance—I do look an object—I must take you back to the Hall. I went there first, not so much as guessing you were in the neighbourhood, and your godmother sent me on here. You may guess I wanted no second bidding. Oh, Joyce! what a lot of time we have wasted by our stupidity. We might have been so happy!"

"And we are," I added. "If we had suffered less our joy would be less full. But oh, Thorold, how could you prefer me to Sybilla?"

"I am sure I cannot tell you, little brown thing, but I did," he answered, laughing. But not until he had kissed me many times would he suffer me to run away for the purpose of dressing.

Thorold rapidly recovered strength and brightness, so that we were married very quietly on the first of September; and sure am I no happier bride ever plighted troth than I; no more beloved wife treads English ground than Joyce Dene!

Our sky has never been darkened by clouds of distrust or coldness. Only two trials have come to mar the perfect happiness of our wedded lives. The first was my mother's death, which occurred three months after our union; she died very peacefully, clinging to me to the last. But for Thorold's goodness and love I felt I could not survive so great a loss. The second trial was much later on, when our little ones were growing up about us—the decease of my generous and noble godmother.

My sisters married well and happily. Eric is now a celebrated physician, and Sybilla—poor Sybilla—is a lonely, miserable woman. The Duke died abroad when she was but twenty-four, and, as his heir married immediately, she sank to the position of Dowager Duchess, with a not too large income to support her dignity.

Once and only once have Thorold and I met her since Heaven gave him back to me. We were driving through Richmond when we saw her carriage approaching.

She was so changed that he did not recognise

her, and not until I hurriedly whispered her name did he uncover.

Then, with one swift, passionate gesture, she turned her disfigured face aside; and, under his breath, I heard my husband murmur,—

"Poor soul!" and I knew that he not only pitied but had forgiven her.

Oh, Thorold, husband and lover! Heaven grant that together, hand in hand, we may reach that goal which waits alike for the rich and poor, the happy and the despairing! and that my dying eyes shall give to you the last glimpse of pure and perfect love!

THE END.

LEILA VANE'S BURDEN.

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CHAPTER XV.

It was Mrs. Bernadine who made an answer to Leila's speech.

"Mrs. Sylvester has seen your father, Miss Vane," she said, and her voice was so cold, so full of repugnance, that Julian did not know it.

He looked quickly at his mother. It was not like her to deny sympathy to anyone, and assuredly this girl, so white, so delicate, so evidently troubled, should have made large demands upon her woman's pity.

For himself, his heart had thrilled instantly in sympathy for Leila in this moment.

He was ignorant, as we know, of the cause of her agitation, where her father was concerned, but already he told himself he understood her so well that he was only too sure the cause was a deep, almost a terrible one.

He had no definite feelings towards Eustace Vane, he neither liked nor disliked him. He found him an agreeable cultivated man, "très bien soigné," and evidently conscious of his own attractions.

Julian would have been supremely astonished if he could have seen into his mother's heart and read the extraordinary interest Eustace Vane had so swiftly awakened there. He would in truth have been more than astonished, he would have been a little alarmed, and a good deal disgusted.

This fact was hidden from him for the moment however, and he therefore had not the clue to the increased coldness of his mother's attitude towards Leila.

He resented it with a touch of anger, but with far greater regret.

His little dream of happiness in anticipating a bond of love and sympathy between his mother and this girl whose sweetness had taken such hold on him, had quickly vanished.

For some reason it was only too evident to Julian that Clarice Bernadine, if she had not taken a positive dislike to her young guest, had certainly not conceived any affection for her.

Sir Julian could only hope that this to him, extraordinary fact, would prove itself later on to be a caprice, and that Leila would not gather its existence.

Leila accepted Mrs. Bernadine's answer with a little bend of her head.

The situation in which she found herself was both painful and awkward to her; it struck her with a new sense of repugnance to her father's intense selfishness and callousness that he should so evidently fail to share her feelings in this respect. His whole bearing was eloquent of his indifference and forgetfulness of what had happened.

Sir Julian's intuition led him to come to her rescue. He could not endure to look at her pale troubled face.

"We have tried to persuade your father to remain to luncheon, but he will not give us this pleasure, Miss Vane."

"Another time, my dear Bernadine, another time," Eustace Vane cried lightly and genially. "I am under a promise to return to my friends for lunch. I have already encroached too long on Mrs. Bernadine's kindness, and I must get this fine creature back in good time. I thought you

would find him a splendid animal. Walters tells me he will part with him for two hundred and fifty—dirt cheap! call it."

The two men drifted instantly into horsey conversation, not that Julian cared about this, but that he saw in it an escape for Leila.

He hoped that his mother would have spoken more graciously to the girl as they stood alone, but Mrs. Bernadine had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

Her jealousy had flamed out hotly once again, as she had seen the eager way in which Julian would have helped this girl. Her dislike became a definite fact in this moment. Leila's attitude to her father—such a charming, tender father! aroused Mrs. Bernadine's strongest disapproval. Her thoughts were very hard towards the girl, in this moment she found her absolutely abjectionable.

Leila was conscious in a vague way, that she had incurred her hostess's displeasure in some way, but the thought made no very great effect upon her. Her whole heart was too sick and heavy to admit of trivial vexation at such a moment.

Seeing that her father was utterly engrossed, and that there was no further need of her presence, Leila moved away, followed by a look of scornful dislike from Mrs. Bernadine. The girl mounted her way slowly to Mrs. Sylvester's room. She found Margot's mother back again at her writing-table.

The young woman and the elder looked at one another for an instant in silence. It was Mrs. Sylvester who spoke first.

"You have seen your father, Leila?"

The girl bowed her head in assent, then she looked upwards.

"And you dear friend?"

Mrs. Sylvester laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"Yes, I too have seen him, but not alone. When I reached the house I found he was already arrived—he was deep in a flirtation with Mrs. Bernadine."

Leila's brows were knitted tightly together.

"You had no opportunity of speaking to him quietly?"

"None whatever," Mrs. Sylvester said, she was so thoroughly annoyed that her tone was curt, almost harsh, but Leila did not misunderstand her anger. "I managed to convey, however, something of the surprise I felt at this strange re-appearance—this calm return after such a departure. I do not flatter myself, however," Mrs. Sylvester added, drily, "that my efforts were in any way successful. However, I do not intend to let him escape me, Leila. I have this moment sent down word requesting in the most imperative way that Mr. Vane will come to me here to attend to some important business."

Leila leaned one hand on the mantelpiece, with the other she pressed her eyes wearily.

"He will not come," she said in a low voice.

Mrs. Sylvester rose.

"I think he will," she said, grimly; "he has evident intentions of cultivating a friendship with the Bernadines, he will therefore not care to have his plans frustrated by me. Of course he has nothing to say for himself, but he will trust to his luck; it will be a cleverer person than myself who will manage to bowl over Eustace Vane, but I shall do my best to give him a good moral shaking at least!"

There came a knock at the door as Mrs. Sylvester ceased speaking, and in answer to her summons a servant entered and announced Mr. Vane.

He followed the servant into the room jauntily, gracefully.

"A family conclave!" he said as the door was closed, and he perceived Leila standing there; his tone was quite charming, though his eyes had a gleam of anger and some anxiety in them.

Mrs. Sylvester put her hand on Leila's shoulder. She pushed the girl down gently into a chair.

"You have had quite enough exertion for today, my child," she said, gently. She turned and faced Mr. Vane as Leila obeyed her and sank almost feebly into the chair. Mrs. Sylvester was not a handsome woman, but she was of a commanding presence, and every line about her

spoke of strength, of energy, of determination. There was so much eloquence in the contemptuous silence of her steady gaze in this moment, that Eustace Vane lost his self-control for once in his life.

"In Heaven's name say what you have to say and be done with it!" he exclaimed, irritably. Mrs. Sylvester smiled and waved him to a chair.

"Sit down," she said; "you are not as young as you imagine yourself to be, Eustace, and as I have a good deal to say to you, you may get tired before I have finished."

The touch upon his age fired the man's vanity; after his intense selfishness, the one dominant most vital part of his nature.

"You always were a boorish woman, Catherine Sylvester," he remarked rudely. "I never had so much pity in all my life for any man as I had for your husband."

Mrs. Sylvester laughed at this.

"Keep your pity for yourself, you will want it all. Come, to business, if you please! Where have you been hiding, and where is the money you owe me? What are your plans for Leila's future?"

Eustace Vane recovered his ruffled composure.

"You ask too many questions at once, Catherine," he said, urbanely.

"I am in no hurry, I give you plenty of time to find your answers—if you can."

"I really cannot see what right you have to cross-examine me in this way," the man said, losing his temper a second time.

"That is not quite correct, Eustace. You evidently know only too well by what right I do this; otherwise I do not imagine you would have taken any trouble to obey my summons and have appeared for this interview."

There was so much truth in this that Eustace Vane was silent a moment.

"The money you claim," he said, after that pause—Mrs. Sylvester laughed softly at this, and Leila winced; "the money you claim shall be repaid you, have no fear."

"I have none," Mrs. Sylvester said, calmly, "for, if it is not repaid voluntarily, before many days are gone, it will be dragged from you by the law."

Mr. Vane seated himself in a chair and tapped his boot with his riding stick.

"I shall regret if you find yourself compelled to resort to such measures with an old friend, Catherine," he said, his voice the perfection of gentle reproach.

"I shall have no regret in the matter at all," Mrs. Sylvester answered quite calmly.

She, too, seated herself at her writing-table and opened a little book.

"I find, on reference to my notes, that you have made repeated promises of repayment during the last eighteen months of money borrowed of me, for false pretences, the sum—"

Mr. Vane waved his stick in the air.

"We know it," he said, graciously; "the sum is a large one, but fortunately I shall be able to meet it."

"The sum," Mrs. Sylvester continued, smoothly, trying not to see the look of deeper pain that was growing on Leila's blanched face, "the sum you owe me, Eustace, is close upon two thousand pounds."

Leila gave a little cry that was as a sword thrust to the good woman's heart.

"I must do it, however," Catherine Sylvester said; "she wavers even now, I can see. She must be forced to realise the truth—forced to know his utter worthlessness, his miserable, dishonourable nature."

"Two thousand pounds is a large sum," she continued in the same deliberate way, "much too large when it is remembered on what grounds it was borrowed, and in what shameless extravagance it has been spent. This money, Leila, was borrowed from me to assist you, and—"

Leila's hands dropped to her knees, her eyes, magnificent in their sudden passion and horror, looked across to the handsome *roué* lounging in his chair comfortably.

"Father!" she said, it was only one word, but it was as a cry from a broken heart.

Mrs. Sylvester rose and went up to the girl.

"I think by this time, Leila, I have no need to

explain to you how dear you are to me, and how it goes to my heart to give you one single touch of sorrow. I speak so openly to you now because I want—as I told you this morning—to teach you the late lesson of knowing and understanding the nature of this man whom you have worshipped so blindly—for whom you have sacrificed yourself so devotedly. But for this reason you would never, never have known what I have just told you—never."

Mr. Vane was tapping his well-shaped foot with a smile on his lips.

"For a christian woman, Catherine," he said, interrupting her, "you have curious principles. Is it not accounted a crime in the eyes of Heaven to attempt to set a child against its parent?"

Mrs. Sylvester turned round.

"Let us leave Heaven out of the question, and since you seem to have remembered that there is a tie of blood, and a claim between you and this poor child, let us devote our attention to that fact, and hear what views you have to propose for Leila's future."

Leila found her voice here.

"No," she said, and her father had a sense of astonishment upon him as he heard the clear coldness of her voice. "No, leave me out of the matter altogether. I make no claim. I desire nothing—only—only to be left alone. I can work, thank Heaven, and I can be independent. My father deserted me in a most terrible hour—he left me to face dishonour, to starve, to die. Do you think it could be easy for me to accept any aid from such a source? God is the judge between us. He—and He alone—knows whether I have ever failed in my duty to my father. What wrong have I ever done that I should have had such wrong done to me! Put me out of the question altogether. You have been such a dear friend, such a true, true friend. Grant me this one thing, I pray of you. I—want nothing but freedom from this perpetual dishonour, peace from this cruel pain, rest, and forgetfulness."

Mrs. Sylvester's arms closed about Leila's form as the words ended in a sob.

Mr. Vane sat whistling softly to himself, and hoping devoutly this most unpleasant interview would end speedily.

The door opening at this moment revealed Margot, brilliant and smiling, come in to exchange a few words with her mother before luncheon.

Her smile died away as she grasped the situation.

Mrs. Sylvester was prompt to act.

"Take Leila to her room, Margot. She had better have lunch upstairs. I let her walk too far. She is exhausted."

In an instant Margot's arm was about her friend, and in silence the two girls left the room.

Mrs. Sylvester left alone, had such an air of fury and disgust, that the man for once had to feel ashamed of himself.

He managed to laugh it off, nevertheless. It would be a clever person who could have made Eustace Vane feel anything seriously for long, unless it might be a wound to his vanity.

"I hope you are not thinking of striking me, Catherine, if so, I am wholly at your mercy," he said with that humour which was one of his greatest fascinations. "You are very strong, you know."

Mrs. Sylvester threw down her note-book on the table with a bang.

"What a contemptible scoundrel you are, Eustace," she said, very quietly. "It is, I suppose, for some wise reason in the scheme of creation that such lost beings as you are born into the world. Yet I fail to see what purpose of good you can serve under any circumstances!"

"We cannot all be blessings you see," Mr. Vane remarked, good-naturedly. "I presume I must have been intended for a beneficent scourge!"

Against herself Mrs. Sylvester had to smile.

"Well, scourge or no scourge," she said very firmly, "I am determined on a settlement. You must pay me every farthing you owe within a week, and you must give me your written promise to leave Leila utterly unmolested for the rest of your natural life."

"That is something I will give you now if you

wish it. I am just as pleased to be done with Leila as she apparently is anxious to be done with me. As for the money, make it a fortnight."

Mrs. Sylvester looked calmly at the delicately cut features, the well-preserved handsomeness of the man.

"A week, Eustace," she said, quietly, "not an hour longer. Surely," she added, with a sneer, "a week should give you plenty of opportunities for borrowing, or robbing your friends."

A wave of colour passed over Eustace Vane's face, then he laughed.

"Time works little change in you, Catherine," he said, pleasantly. He picked up his hat. "Strange how the 'bourgeois' element is never thoroughly worked out, no matter how closely it is surrounded by refining influences and associations!"

Mrs. Sylvester laughed at this heartily.

"If by 'bourgeois' I am to translate honesty, I see no cause for regret in this fact, Eustace. Are you going? well, good-bye. Don't forget and don't attempt to disappear, for I shall set those after you who—"

Mr. Vane drew himself up with a gratifying glance at the mirror.

"So far from entertaining any idea of disappearing, Catherine," he said, loftily, "I may as well tell you, you will have every opportunity of watching me closely for the next few days. I have this moment accepted an invitation from your charming friend, Mrs. Bernadine, to come and join her party here. I arrive to-morrow. Now I must be off; good-bye. You do not seem pleased, Catherine, at the prospect of having me so near to you. I shall have to exert myself to win back the place I think I may say surely I once held in your esteem."

Laughing softly to himself, Mr. Vane took himself gracefully out of the room, leaving Mrs. Sylvester more discomfited than she could well have expressed.

This was a move for which she was wholly unprepared.

"He comes—we go—that is all. I shall be sorry, but I see no other alternative, the strain would be far too great upon that poor child's nerves. What a blackguard the man is; and to think that once—" a mantle of deep colour covered Catherine Sylvester's resolute comely face for an instant, the next she was herself again.

"I must talk it over with Margot," she said after a few moments reflection; "I wish I could open my heart to Julian, what a comfort that would be! But Leila would never endure that, so I must put it out of my mind. I will come to my decision before to-morrow. I have a very strong feeling against allowing Eustace to drive us away from here. I think by remaining I may be able to give him back some of the annoyance he has given us so generously. At any rate I will talk to Margot, she is sensible and she loves Leila so much she will see what is best to be done for the girl in this dilemma."

CHAPTER XVI.

MARGOT'S view of the matter was to remain at Wilton Crosbie.

"Surely Leila has suffered enough through her father! Must she lose every little pleasure just because he is a monster of selfishness? Let her remain, mother darling. We are here, you and I, to look after her, and see that she is not worried if possible; and we will take her out every day as much as we can. If you talk to Sir Julian I know he will arrange everything you want in the way of excursions."

After some reflection Mrs. Sylvester decided upon accepting Margot's advice.

"It may be a good thing after all for Leila to be brought in close contact with her father under the circumstances. His shameless indifference to all he has done is the best medium with which to force home to her his worthlessness. Already she is changed."

Leila acquiesced silently to all that her friends suggested.

She was so very quiet, so composed that even Margot was deceived by her attitude.

"I believe she has ceased to suffer quite as keenly as she did, mother," the girl said to Mrs. Sylvester late the night of that day.

"Leila has had a terrible blow. I doubt if it will ever wholly pass away," Mrs. Sylvester answered.

The evening had passed pleasantly enough. Sir Julian, relieved and glad at the arrival of his cousin Giles, and filled with new hope for the eventual success of his plans for the boy, was less grave than usual. His mother was in gracious spirits to everyone, except to Leila; but her coldness to the girl was unmarked, as there were two or three guests to dinner and her whole attention was claimed by them.

As a sop to Cicely Sylvester's wounded vanity one of these guests happened to be a certain Peer, widowed and not young, whom she had met at odd times during the autumn, and who was very much interested in her exquisitely fair prettiness.

Cicely, the moment she saw Lord Rylstone advance towards her abandoned her hopeless hope of attracting Julian.

She did not know that she had much chance with her middle-aged admirer, but she resolved to find this out before very long.

With this result she turned her back on the poor young man with whom she had been flirting so resolutely the last few days, and devoted herself to Lord Rylstone.

Julian was undisguisedly amused at Cicely's coquetry. He could not help contrasting her prettiness with Leila's sombre look, her pallor, her silence.

It had been one of Leila's heavy days, and her beauty was shadowed in consequence.

Mrs. Bernadine had noted this with almost as much gladness as Cicely had felt.

"She is a positive fright to-night, and what a 'poscuse' the girl is! Of course all that sadness is done to attract the men."

The mother watched Julian narrowly, but he did not once approach Leila.

He had such a strong knowledge that she was suffering that he felt he could not venture to address her with some trivialities, so he contented himself with looking at her as much as possible, being quite unaware that his mother in her turn was watching him with a pain in her eyes and a hot angry determination in her heart, which would have been a revelation of grief to Julian could he have only imagined it.

"I will not endure it," Mrs. Bernadine was saying to herself, passionately. "Julian is very cruel, he seems to have forgotten me altogether ever since that odious girl came here. I hate her, and I will punish him somehow for making me so miserable."

In such way did this poor foolish woman turn and rend the son who had been to her threefold more than son, brother, or husband. There was destined to be great sorrow ahead for Julian Bernadine through his mother's senseless and most selfish jealousy.

Mr. Vane had been a guest two days at Wilton Crosbie, and he had made himself universally popular. The truth between Mrs. Sylvester and himself was carried out smoothly. Margot spoke to him as little as possible. Cicely gushed over him (to annoy her mother and sister) and Leila never addressed one word to him voluntarily.

Since that moment in Mrs. Sylvester's room when the fresh story of the man's treachery and dishonour had been unfolded to her, Leila seemed like a creature in a dream.

She knew that she would awake from this dream swiftly, one day soon she would stand face to face with the full misery of her position, the degradation of knowing that her father's cunning and falseness had stripped from her even the poor satisfaction she had imagined remained to her pride.

The knowledge that while she had been toiling and struggling and sacrificing herself in every way to provide her father with luxuries, he had gone to her friends and in her name had borrowed large sums of money, was something so terrible so crushing to the girl's proud spirit, she felt she would never recover from it. It had, in fact,

stunned her in a way, it had robbed her of all her energy and courage for a time.

Had it not been so, Leila could never have allowed Margot to insist on her remaining at Wilton Crosbie and meeting the man who, though her nearest kin was her greatest enemy.

Sir Julian found himself watching Leila's father very carefully. He was prepared to distrust and dislike the man only because he knew through the Sylvester's hints and Leila's own white troubled face that Eustace Vane was the cause of sorrow to the girl he already confessed to himself he loved.

Frankly he had to own that he could find nothing flagrantly wrong or disagreeable about his guest.

Eustace Vane was an exceedingly charming man, cultivated to the highest degree, he was well read and a clever arguer; his manner to Leila and about her when she was not present, was tinged with tenderness. He seemed to be proud of her.

To Mrs. Bernadine he spoke openly of this pride which was neither pleasant or comprehensible to her. In fact, he spoke a great deal to Mrs. Bernadine, and his evident admiration and desire for her society was exceedingly satisfactory to that charming but foolish woman.

Margot, out of all the party, was perhaps the most unhappy at this moment, for she was denied that sort of cloud-like apathy which had fallen upon Leila, muffling the sharpness of her mental pain for a time at least.

Yes; Margot, bright, happy, beautiful, in her fresh girlhood, was unhappy for the first time in her life.

She had dreamed a dream, and she had been awakened rudely from that dream.

Julian Bernadine would never love her. This truth had come home to Margot forcibly, weightily, during these two days following on Eustace Vane's inopportune appearance at Wilton Crosbie.

It had been Julian himself, who with the utmost unconscious cruelty, had awakened Margot from her brief dream.

It had been the anxiety, the love note in his voice as he spoke to the girl of her dear friend, that revealed the truth to Margot, and plunged her into the chill depths of blighted hopes, broken desires.

Margot was no coward.

Her first thought was to hide her disappointment and its attendant gloom from everyone, from her mother, from Leila, from Julian most of all. And she succeeded admirably.

If she was a little paler than usual, she had an easy excuse of fatigue ready, for she was walking or running, or playing tennis, or riding the whole day long.

"A splendid young creature!" Eustace Vane called her with keen appreciation of Margot's magnificent colouring and splendid vitality. He was quite sincere in his admiration of Madeleine Sylvester though he did not like her.

Margot was indifferent alike to his dislike and his admiration.

On the morning of the third day of his visit the girl escaped from the house.

"I am going violet hunting," she cried to Leila, whom she tried to tempt out too. "Don't expect me for several hours, and, Leila, my darling, promise me not to work too long."

Leila gave the promise in that dull, quiet way which told Margot more plainly than words how the grief and mortification of her father's treachery in the past, and indifference in the present, was eating into her heart. There were tears in Margot's eyes as she made her way into the grounds.

"How can I give her happiness—life can never be quite the same to me again—at least I don't think it can be—but if I could see Leila happy—if he would only speak to her." The "he" in her thoughts was Julian of course, "but," came the after reflection, "he is wise—if he were to speak he would startle her, and perhaps destroy all his hopes. He is right to wait, someday, soon, surely, she will see the story written in his eyes. Ah! Leila, darling, when that day comes, then at least you will be happy, thank Heaven!"



"YOU ARE SIR JULIAN'S COUSIN GILES, I AM SURE," MARGOT SAID, STRETCHING OUT HER HAND.

Margot did not search very industriously for violets. She pushed her way into the depths of the wood that bordered on part of the lower grounds, but tears were blinding her all the way, and by-and-by when she came to a quiet spot where none could see her, she sat down and gave way to her grief in a flood of tears.

It was her farewell to Julian, and not until this moment, did Margot know how dear her dream had become to her. She sat there for a long time till the tear stains were dried on her cheeks, and the pain had grown less bitter in her heart—then, when she would have started to return to the house she suddenly became aware how, she could hardly have told, that she was not alone. Lifting her eyes Margot saw at some little distance the figure of a young man standing regarding her with undisguised interest and something like pity.

Margot rose to her feet quickly, a blush giving back to her face her usual look of brilliant beauty and health.

She knew in an instant that she was in the presence of Giles Bernadine, the young man whose future was such a source of anxiety to Sir Julian.

She moved towards him and spoke his name involuntarily. He was so young, so fair to look upon, and yet there was such a settled expression of trouble upon his face, that the girl's sensitive nature yearned to minister to him.

She forgot her own grief in thought of his.

"You are Sir Julian's cousin Giles, I am sure," she said, as she was close to him, and she stretched out her hand.

Giles Bernadine took it instantly doffing his cap, his face had blushed as hers had done, but now it was pale.

"I hope I did not startle you," he said, hesitatingly. "I did not realize that anyone was there till I had almost reached you."

Margot looked at him frankly out of her clear pure eyes, that were hardly spoilt by the tears she had shed.

"I dare say you thought me a strange sort of

creature, Mr. Bernadine," she said; "the truth is I was vexed and worried, and—and not quite happy; and being a woman, you see," with a little laugh, "I felt I must find a quiet spot and cry it all away!"

The young man looking at her and listening to her frank voice thought he had never come across a sweeter, brighter, truer blossom of womanhood than this girl.

"And have you succeeded?" he asked, very gently; Margot nodded her head almost gaily.

"Tears are a great comfort," she said.

He smiled faintly.

"Are they?" he paused. "I wish I, too, could cry," he said after that pause.

Margot's heart thrilled, there was so much suffering in the quiet words. She had suddenly come upon her just the same kind of yearning, protecting feeling for this young man as she had for Leila.

She could not say anything, remembering his story and all that belonged to it, what was there she could say? But her eyes were more eloquent than her words would have been, and they sent a gleam of pleasure through Giles Bernadine's gloomy thoughts.

"Are you busy; will you come and help me look for some violets?" she asked him, half shyly.

He assented, and very speedily they were quite good friends.

He showed her the little keeper's lodge where he was living.

"Julian is the best, the dearest, the truest friend in the whole world," he said to her; "no brother could have done more for me than he has done and is doing!"

"He will not rest till he has taken away all your trouble," Margot said, gently, having a grateful sense that, since her tears, the mention and remembrance of Julian was not fraught with so much pain.

"All my life will be for him," Giles Bernadine said with deep agitation in his voice.

After this they drifted into lighter conver-

sation, and Margot's basket had quite a wealth of violets.

"I think I envy you your little home down here; it is so calm, so fragrant!" the girl said as at last she turned to go. "I hope I shall see you again soon, Mr. Bernadine!"

"If you will wander in this direction, you will find me waiting. I—I shall not go to the house just yet, although my cousin and his mother are eager that I should do so."

"Well, if you will not come and call upon me, I," Margot said, blushing and smiling, "I will promise to come and see you. I will bring my friend with me next time. She will love these woods, and they will do her good; they are so fresh and peaceful. You will promise to admire my dear friend, Leila Vane, very much, for," Margot said, her generous heart giving forth deeper, truer love, if possible, to the girl who had so unconsciously robbed her of all she had desired; "for I think there is no one like her in all the world! Good-bye, again! I hope before long you will be quite—quite happy!"

Giles Bernadine stood under the trees and watched Margot walk away, the sunlight on her red gold hair, her movements easy and graceful, her figure, in its pretty serge gown, a picture, as it melted into the distance.

The young man was conscious of a tender pleasure and a regret as his eyes watched Margot pass out of sight, then his brow clouded.

"Vane!" he said to himself; "Vane! how the name haunts me. Pray Heaven this girl may be no kin with that villain Eustace Vane who has brought me to where I stand now!"

(To be continued.)

THE Sultan of Turkey has ordered that French hereafter shall be a compulsory part of the course in Turkish now at colleges. Heretofore, it is said, foreign languages in these institutions were forbidden.



'YOU ARE A MURDERESS, YOLANDE KILDARE, IF EVER LIVING WOMAN WAS!' LYULPH SAID, STRIVING TO CONTROL HIS VOICE.

DR. DURHAM'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Do not tell me!" cried Margery Durham on a curious impulse of the moment. "Because—because, after all, if it is anything too painful, I believe that I would rather not—I mean, I think—"

But Lyulph Lynne interrupted her firmly.

"It is best that you should hear it," he said; "and indeed had I been less of a coward I should have told you long ago, Miss Durham. However I can touch the old wound now without quailing or flinching, and therefore it is time that I should clear myself—to a certain extent—in your eyes."

"You have been very good, very patient; and I have been waiting a long while for this opportunity to speak with you alone. Do you not recollect, some two or three months ago, in this very garden, I promised that I would tell you everything with regard to myself and Miss Kildare, when I should come to know you better, and if, too, you would but trust me yet a little longer? Have you so soon, then, forgotten?"

"I rarely forget," Margery answered vaguely, and sorely ill at ease. "I recollect perfectly."

They were walking now slowly round the orchard, the red sunlight in their eyes.

The cadence of the brook, the flute-like notes of blackbird and thrush, seemed somehow to jar upon the ear of Margery that evening as she listened to the voice of her companion speaking of Yolande Kildare.

"Unpleasant stories are best told briefly, are they not?" Mr. Lynne said. "I will try, therefore, to give you this unhappy narrative of mine in as few words as it is possible to use, though I confess frankly that I find it rather difficult to begin."

"You must know, then, Miss Durham, that prior to my coming here to Foxdale I lived abroad—on the Continent—chiefly in Germany."

"After the death of my mother"—here his voice faltered—"I remained on at Heidelberg, where indeed her death took place, partly because I was fond of the quaint old town in which I had been educated, but perhaps more especially on account of a very dear friend who was still studying there, and whom I wished to be near."

"He stood as much alone in the world as I did myself. His name was Karl von Rosenberg. And it was at Heidelberg that I first met Yolande Kildare."

They paced beneath the damson boughs for a few moments in silence.

Then Lyulph Lynne spoke again.

"About this time—just before I met her, Miss Durham, understand—I was—well, looking out for work; was anxious, in fact, to get over to England, knowing," said he, with sudden bitterness, "knowing well that employment of a certain kind awaited me there."

"I had long since qualified myself for the profession I had elected to follow, had passed duly and successfully all preliminary and necessary examinations; and, had it not been that there existed strong reasons, reasons involving a solemn and a sacred duty, for my remaining within an easy distance of home—England, I mean—I should have accepted a chance offer of a lucrative berth in Japan and have turned my back upon the mother-country altogether. However, circumstances were against me, and that could not be."

Again the young man paused, and passed his hand over his eyes.

When he spoke the name of his friend, Karl von Rosenberg, his voice had grown almost indistinct.

At the mention of that unknown foreign friend Margery's own heart ached and smote her miserably—for had not she heard that self-same name once before?

Had not she gathered already—clandestinely, by guilty stealth—an inkling, something more than a suspicion indeed, of the tragedy she was about to hear throughout?

"One day," Lyulph Lynne continued, "business—a very tedious business it turned out to be when I arrived there—necessitated my setting out for Munich."

"I was absent from Heidelberg for more than a month. It was the beginning of March when I went away; April before I could return. On the very day that I got back I looked up Karl von Rosenberg."

"Well, dear old fellow," I said, entering his rooms unceremoniously, for we were like brothers, 'I have returned at last, as you see. Did you think I was lost? Come, now, confess to me what you have been doing with yourself in my absence.'

"He was an affectionate and a generous-hearted fellow, with a nature as open as the day."

"I had been barely ten minutes in his society before he informed me, albeit half shyly, that whilst I had been away at Munich he had found some new acquaintances in Heidelberg."

"They were people stopping at the Hotel de Russie, he said—a lady and her daughter. Young Otto Weiss, who knew them quite well, had introduced him; and they were the most delightful people imaginable—positively charming—the daughter especially, who was divinely fair into the bargain."

"But their name, Karl?" said I, laughing.

"You talk and gesticulate wildly enough—but their name, my friend; you have not yet told me their name!"

"Kildara," he answered, with his queer German accent—"Mrs. and Miss Kildara. You also must know them, dear fellow. You will be charmed with them as am I."

"On the following day Karl and I, strolling together along the Anlago, met Mrs. and Miss Kildara walking out likewise. Do I weary you?" Mr. Lynne inquired of Margery, abruptly.

"No—go," she replied hurriedly. "Go on, if you please. Believe me, I am deeply interested."

"Well, Miss Durham, as I was telling you, we met the Kildares on the Anlago, face to face, and

you Rosenberg, in his loyal, extravagant way, forthwith took upon himself to make me known to them as the dear friend of whom they had heard him speak so often, and whom he, Karl himself, loved as a brother; which, poor fellow I know was true.

"Looking then upon the face of Yolande Kildare for the first time in my life, I knew in that instant—at least, so I was telling myself as I looked at her—that I had found my earthly fate for weal or woe.

"Great Heaven, how I loved her!

"I would have died for her sake cheerfully in those days of madness, blind fool that I was! Miss Durham, you are shivering," he broke off, kindly. "Let us go indoors—it is growing dark and chilly. I can finish my story in the house just as well as out here, you know."

"I am not shivering; and it is not in the least chilly," Margery denied, almost sharply; "and I prefer to hear the end of the story out here," she added, with a touch of perversity.

So once more Mr. Lynne took up the thread of his narrative, interrupting himself again in the recital scarcely at all until the very end of it was reached.

Speaking firmly and low, his voice faltering only when he uttered the name of his friend, he continued straight on in the confession until there was nothing left of it to tell.

"So we met," he said—"I and Yolande Kildare; and, after that first fateful meeting, saw each other constantly.

"Half the men in that quaint old German town, I believe, were going mad for love of the beautiful English girl; and I myself, who now was also under the spell of her dangerous beauty, her bewildering fascinations, marvelled not in the slightest at their hopeless folly.

"Indeed I was nearly wild with joy myself when I discerned that she favoured me—me unquestionably, unmistakably—before them all; smiled on me whilst she snubbed others; looked at me wistfully with those cruel eyes of hers in a way which seemed to scorch my very soul.

"When she sang her Italian songs of love in death, and of death through love, it was upon me, and me alone, that the haunting pathos of her eyes was turned.

"When we said 'good-bye' beneath the tender glimmer of stars, it was within my hand that hers would linger always.

"What cared I for the marked incivility of the mother? Mrs. Kildare, I knew, regarded me from the detrimental stand-point, and I had felt that she would be hostile from the first.

"It was obvious to everyone, indeed, that Mrs. Kildare encouraged no man as a suitor for her daughter unless there was good reason to believe that he was thoroughly worth the cultivating. But Mrs. Kildare, her schemes and her tactics, I ignored utterly.

"The weather was unusually fine and warm for the time of year, and we got up excursions without number.

"There were out-door parties in the Castle ruins, picnics down the lovely Neckar; several times we rowed to Siechelhausen; and once we made up a party to the vineyards of Neckar-Steinach.

"And there it was, in those vineyards, that I lost my head completely, and swore to the English coquette that I could no longer live my life without her; that my love for her was boundless, gaugeless, ungovernable; in short, would she stoop so low as to marry me, all poor and unknown as I was at present, and link her destiny thenceforward with my own!

"Yes, she told me, gladly. She laid her golden head upon my breast, clung to me, wept—declaring vehemently that she loved me, and me alone, with all her strength and soul, and would follow me cheerfully with bare feet, if need were, to the uttermost ends of the earth.

"I believed her. Believed myself, moreover, to be the happiest man in creation.

"Bah! Miss Durham, why do I tell you all this!—the dreary, sordid tale of an unworthy passion—you who can hardly conceive, can have realised so little as yet, what a bad, base world is this in which we live; how false it is, how hollow, how full of sin and mockery and wretchedness

beyond all words—a heart-breaking world of grim disenchantment and fleeting, illusory shadows.

"The story, I should think, must be revolting to you, as indeed the bare remembrance of the reality of it all is unto me. And yet," cried Lyulph Lynne earnestly, and not without a touch of passion, "I want you, Miss Durham, to know everything, I want to clear myself wholly in your sight with reference to Yolande Kildare!"

Margery bowed her head as if in tacit acquiescence, but never a word now spoke she; and Mr. Lynne went on.

"Well, and during all this time Karl von Rosenberg, as it seemed to me, was growing a different, a changed man.

"His light, extravagant ways, his wild amusing talk, appeared to have forsaken him entirely.

"He was becoming strange and uncomfortable in his manner—irritable, morose even; and I noticed, too, that he often avoided me. The old laughter-loving, light-hearted Karl was gone; a new and another Karl von Rosenberg, hitherto unknown to me, had somehow taken his place, as it were.

"I marvelled at, mourned over the change in him, a change at once so mysterious and inexplicable—for, as I live, I could not understand it at the time.

"I ventured to speak to him one evening—kindly and lovingly—put my hand gently upon his shoulder, and asked him what was wrong!

"But he shook me off, and swore to himself in German; begged me to leave him alone and not bother him with stupid questions. Puzzled and hurt, I sighed and turned away.

"A day or two after that one on which I had declared my love to Yolande in the sunny vineyard at Neckar-Steinach, I sought an interview with Mrs. Kildare herself.

"She was in a furious passion, as I had quite expected she would be, though at the same time she controlled herself admirably, alike in the suavity of her manner and in the accents of her quivering voice.

"She even smiled as she pointed towards the door, telling me softly that she would sooner see Yolande dead and lying in her grave than wedded to poverty and misery with a paltry student like myself. Defying her, I left her, and went home to the house where I lodged.

"Late that self-same night, as I was sitting alone and dreaming of Yolande, Karl von Rosenberg rushed in, wild-eyed, death-pale, dishevelled.

Throwing himself recklessly upon the nearest chair, he bowed his poor rough head upon the arms he had flung across the table, and there, unmanned completely, sobbed like a child.

"Karl," said I, bending over him affectionately, startled at this sudden outbreak, "what is the matter, what ails you, dear old fellow! Come, tell me."

"He lifted then a haggard face all hopeless and tear-stained, a look akin to hatred itself lighting up transiently those fierce scowling eyes wherein stannish love only had been wont to kindle before.

"Lyulph," he burst forth, "you traitor!"

"I was staggered.

"Karl, Karl," I said gravely, "you must explain—I insist on it. The days of Jarzac and Chataigneraie are not yet quite dead in this part of the world, remember—far from it, you know," I added, half-jesting. "Now, then, dear old chap, tell me what you mean. Out with it!"

"Tell you what I mean!" he echoed fiercely.

"So! You are a traitor, a double traitor, Lyulph Lynne, because—because you have stolen her deliberately from me. You knew that she was mine—you must have known it; but you set yourself to work to wean her love from me! You have won her for yourself, I say—have cheated and hoodwinked me, your own familiar friend; and—now to-night she laughs in my face, and throws me heartlessly overboard. Heaven help me if this be friendship!"

"On my honour, Rosenberg," I said very anxiously, "I do not understand you."

"He sprang up from his seat then, shook back his rouged hair, and began to pace the room like a caged animal; talking volubly the while, and gesticulating in the old wild way.

"And this is what I managed to gather from his ravings,—

"He had loved, adored, Yolande Kildare, he declared, even before I had got back from Munich; had in all humility confessed as much to her, had implored her not to spurn him, had vowed to accomplish miracles for her sweet sake; and, in return for this slavish idolatry of his, he had obtained from her false lips a light, coquettish promise to the effect that she would perhaps think about 'his nonsense'; she did not know for certain; but, all the same, he was to breathe no word to any living soul concerning this little affair of theirs, because just at present she was mistrustful of her own mind and feelings. Worshipping her, he humoured her in the caprice, and obeyed her to the letter.

"Soon, however, she became languid in her manner towards him, most difficult to please, complained of his boring her, and at times snubbed him unmercifully; was cold, cruel, laughed at and mimicked him even.

"He threatened her at length that he would tell me of that half tender promise of hers—her mother, everybody, if she were not kinder and more just towards him, treating him, in fact, as she used to do when I was away at Munich.

"But at this she had veered round in her subtle fashion, reproaching him for his cruelty, his changeable ways, and praying him for his word's sake not to act so foolishly.

"Of course he yielded to the charm of her entreaty—because, when she willed it so, to deny her was impossible.

"And only that very night, it seemed, without a word or sign of warning, unless her recent behaviour might be interpreted as such, the blow had fallen.

"She had dashed off to Karl von Rosenberg, a proud cold little note, commanding him thenceforward to think no more of her, because she had pledged her faith to his friend.

"Oh, Lyulph, my brother," he said, "it is not true! Tell me with your own lips that it is not true! I have seen, of course, that you admired her—indeed it would have been a most unnatural thing had you failed to do so. I have seen, too, that she smiled upon you; but I thought that it was merely her way of vexing me, of trying my endurance as far as possible.

"I have hoped and believed all along that you knew she was mine; and I thought that you understood quite well the reason of my frequent ill-temper, my moods, my reticence of late.

"I believed—Heaven help me! he cried piteously, striking his forehead with his open palm—"Heaven help me, I have not known what to believe sometimes! You must not now assure me that I have been deceived in her, am duped, have been tricked throughout. You must not tell me now, Lyulph, that she was only playing with me—only playing with me," he repeated, half in sudden reviving hope, half in wild despair—"only playing with me and amusing herself!"

"Karl, old fellow," I said evasively, my heart hardening gradually against the woman who could play so vile a part, "Karl, I suspected nothing of all this—nothing. Had I known, had I dreamed, had I suspected even for one instant—oh I believe me, dear Rosenberg—"

CHAPTER XIV.

"But with a passionate gesture Karl von Rosenberg stopped me.

"Ach!" he exclaimed, "you mean to say, then, that there is no mistake!—that she has duped me, fooled me, after all! By the powers above!—his eyes gleaming oddly—"I should like to feel that soft white slender throat of hers close between my own two hands—here! now! so!—and I'd wring, crush out the lying breath from her frail false body, gasp by gasp, until I'd killed her!"

"I do not see that you are one whit more duped in the matter than I," I said, resolving that I would call upon Miss Kildare the very first thing on the following day; being then, myself, too wretched to feel greatly shocked at

this unholy thirst for summary vengeance. 'She has deceived, tricked us both, Karl, so far as I can make out.'

"And you give me your *parole d'honneur*, my friend," he said, in a more subdued voice, a voice so touchingly miserable—"that you did not take her from me wittingly!"

"You should know me better, I think," I returned, hurt and sorrowful, "than to doubt me. You, Karl! I have told you so once. If I cannot convince you of the truth—"

"Forgive me," he groaned, grasping my hand hard; "I am not myself to-night. I suppose you will settle it between you somehow—you and she!" he added, with a tired, pre-occupied air.

"Yes—trust me, Karl," I answered; "we shall settle it all somehow between us, do not fear."

"I fancy that he understood. He asked no further question."

"Well, good-bye, Lyulph," he said slowly—"good-bye, dear old friend."

"What, going, Karl?" said I, astonished. "And why good-bye, old fellow!"

"He had already reached the door; but, turning, he came back and wrung my hand lingeringly for the second time."

"Why is it good-bye, you ask?" said he, with extraordinary gentleness, lifting my arm suddenly and placing it round his neck, and then caressingly holding it there; "because, Lyulph, my friend, I cannot stop in—In Heidelberg after this affair. I shall cut the place, as you English call it; it has become unbearable—odious beyond words to me. I am going a journey, my brother," he said, his wild eyes growing vague and mournful, "to—some far land, some distant region, where the heartlessness and the treachery of Yolande Kildare will perhaps be a pain forgotten. *Je vais chercher un grand peut-être*, he added, as one in a dream."

"I was mystified at the time, puzzled as to what he might intend, but comprehended fully enough afterwards when, alas! it was all too late."

"He was gone. I was alone. I never again beheld Karl von Rosenberg alive."

"All night long, that dreary night through, I could not sleep, did not indeed once close my eyes."

"Betimes next morning I was wending my steps towards the Hôtel de Russie, when I met von Rosenberg's old French landlady hastening along the street in eager quest of me."

"*Mon Dieu!*" she cried, when we came together, "but it is all too terrible! *Hélas!* come quick, monsieur; come quick, for the love of Heaven!"

"Well-nigh speechless in the apprehension which had seized on me, in a nameless sense of horror that turned me sick, I hurried with the active old Frenchwoman to the house where she lived—she full of voluble explanation as we went along—and preceded her up the staircase to the young student's room."

"He was there, poor fellow, quite dead, half-knelling, half-lying across his bed, and weltering in a pool of his own life-blood—the revolver with which the deed had been done still grasped in his clenched warm hand."

"It was a horrid sight—shocking, inhuman! And it was the work of Yolande Kildare!"

"He have sit up all this one night through, writing and pacing about," whispered the old landlady, wringing her skinny hands; "and early in the morning, scarcely one minute ago, we heard the fatal report. *Nom de Dieu!* but it is too terrible," she croaked monotonously.

"I looked around the familiar room and saw two letters lying on the table, showing there conspicuously among his books and papers. One of them was addressed to myself—the other to Miss Kildare. Both envelopes were sealed with black wax; and Yolande's was splashed with blood—his own wet warm blood."

"I opened mine on the spot."

"It was a long and closely-written farewell, declaring emphatically, over and over again, that he, the writer, Karl von Rosenberg, could not live without the love of Yolande Kildare—that

she, and she alone, had driven him to this last desperate and shameful act."

"In a postscript he said that he had put an end to his troubles in *der kürzeste wey*—the best way." Poor impulsive, misguided Karl!

"Thrusting into my pocket the letter for Yolande, I locked the door of that dreadful chamber, and carried away the key of it with me; then, thus armed, I once more wended my steps in the direction of the Hôtel de Russie."

"Doubly painful, doubly vital, would be my errand thither now."

"And I seemed all the while to be moving in a kind of ghastly dream. For I could indeed hardly realise yet that young Karl von Rosenberg, my chosen friend, was dead—dead, moreover, by his own hand—dead beyond recall!"

"The poor lad's face, in its silent and awful anguish, haunted me. I could not forget it. Death in that darkened room which I had so lately left, was by no means a holy sight—the aspect of the 'cold, pale stranger' was not, as I had just looked upon him, 'sublime, beautiful, serenely still.'"

"Unannounced I went up to the Kildares' apartments, their private *salon*, and fortunately found Yolande alone, waiting breakfast for her mother."

"She moved towards me swiftly, a radiant smile of welcome on her lips. Lovely and fresh as the morning itself looked she. Would the power and magnetism of her wondrous beauty unnerve me, conquer the strength of my fierce determination! No, a thousand times no, I swore to myself passionately. She should suffer—as others through her had suffered. How little did she dream at the moment what I had come for—the weight and woe of my errand!"

"Lyulph," she laughed, surprised and glad, with many a word of endearment, "you are early indeed! And mamma is not down yet. How lucky, is it not? But—but how odd—how pale you are looking! Lyulph, speak—"

"Trembling, but firm in my purpose, I put her clinging arms away from me; waved her back. She seemed pained, astonished, and suddenly very much afraid."

"Lyulph!" she cried again, with a wild, questioning look.

"I gave her the blood-stained letter, looking her straight in the face."

"Here," said I, striving to control my voice, "is a message from a dead man; a man, who, for your sake, shot himself through the heart this morning. You are a murderer, Yolande Kildare, if ever living woman was!"

"And in a few rapid sentences I told her all that had happened—all that I had heard from von Rosenberg himself on the night before. She shrieked; and, falling upon a couch, buried her head in the cushions."

"And now—and now, Yolande," said I hoarsely, "we part, you and I, and part for ever. Heaven help us both!"

"In an instant, then, she was upon my breast, and I could not shake her off. The scene which followed was distressing—terrible—I shall remember that hour, indeed, until my dying day. What with my love for her on the one hand, my horror of her perfidy on the other, the balance and mastery of the conflict were almost beyond my strength."

"In retrospect, I am inclined to wonder sometimes—albeit unspeakably thankful for my deliverance—how was it possible I could have come off the victor; the temptation to yield and to forgive was surely more, in the circumstances, than mortal man might reasonably expect to withstand."

"But I was alike deaf to her prayers, excuses, entreaties; blind to her floods of tears; and at last I got away. As I passed out Mrs. Kildare herself entered; and Yolande—her powers spent, her passionate energy gone—dropped senseless on the floor at her astonished mother's feet."

"I believe she was prostrated for days afterwards—I do not know. Anyway, when next I met her, it was here, Miss Durham, at your father's house in Foxdale. She did not strike me then as looking particularly ill."

"After all, I suspect, her suffering was slight in comparison with that which was my own

portion in the matter. To women of her calibre, suffering is but another name for hurt vanity or wounded pride. They are in reality too shallow, too selfish to feel deeply and intensely—they act always far more than they feel; oftentimes feigning a grief which absolutely never touches them."

"Karl von Rosenberg was laid in a grave upon the hill-side; I myself and an uncle of his—a venerable professor attached to the University, who was about the only relative I ever heard Karl speak of at any time—together following the bier to that last earthly resting-place among the pheasant woods and vineyards which slope down to the Neckar's bank."

"This uncle was able to prove beyond all question that the taint of insanity was in the blood of the Rosenberg family; that Karl's own father, in fact, had died incurable in a Moravian madhouse. Sad as it was to discover this, the revelation notwithstanding lifted a great weight from my heart; for now my dear, lost friend would be duly accorded a decent and Christian burial, and would not be doomed, as I had feared at first, to the dishonoured grave of the suicide—the *felo de se*."

"I waited until the quiet spot was marked by a plain gray marble slab—the cold, the perpetuating testimony of a woman's treachery—and then packed up my goods and chattels without any further delay and hastened from Heidelberg straightway to England."

"You know, Miss Durham, how I came to Foxdale; and you may imagine how taken aback I was to encounter here the Kildares, of all people in the world! For, curious as it may appear to you, I had never once heard from either of them, during our brief acquaintance, the name of their home in England, or their county even. I was never more astonished, disagreeably astonished in all my life, than when I met in Foxdale here—Yolande Kildare."

"There," the young man concluded, with a breath of unmistakable relief, "that is the story which I wished you to hear, Miss Durham; though I fear the telling of it has taken more time than I thought at the beginning. However, I feel much easier in my mind, happier altogether somehow, now that I have made a clean breast of it all to you. Will you kindly pardon me if the recital has bored and wearied you?"

Then Margery drew a long, tremulous sigh involuntarily, and turned her head aside in the twilight.

Well, it was solved at last, she thought, that riddle respecting Yolande Kildare; and she scarcely knew yet whether she was sorry or glad to have heard the strange mystery explained away, now that it was a secret no longer kept back from her knowledge.

She comprehended and honoured his reticence, so far as that more recent page of the story was concerned—that page of it which might or might not prove to be the last of all—who should say!—and which had been recorded in tears and passion- rent sobs one night in her father's surgery.

No; Lyulph Lynne was too staunch, too loyal-hearted and high-minded, Margery Durham knew, to tell her of that.

He would never betray Yolande unnecessarily.

"You give me no answer," he said, gravely, at length. "I am afraid that I have over-taxed your patience!"

"Indeed no; pray think no such thing," Margery then hastened to declare. "I was merely pondering all that you have just now told me. Mr. Lynne, she—Yolande—she must have loved—she must have loved you very dearly!"

"It was said at last!"

"You mean—"

"Yes, I mean Yolande Kildare," said Margery Durham more bravely.

"Women like her," was his cold reply, "never really love, I believe; though they have many love affairs and many lovers, as a rule, of course. Their dominant attributes are cruelty and vanity. The admiration and the subjugation of men are as the very breath of life to them."

Margery did not consider it exactly seemly that she should give utterance to the idea which

then occurred to her—the idea that perhaps with all such women there is always, sooner or later, the one great over-powering and redeeming master-passion, and that unhappy Yolande's fate must have overtaken her unaware at Heidelberg on that day when Lyulph Lynne first crossed her path.

"Yes; I suppose she was cruel—very cruel," she said aloud, absently.

"And I?" was the moody rejoinder, "can never forgive her. I never will."

The night wind was sighing in the damson-trees, and stirring, ghost-like, the troubled leaves.

The early autumn gloaming was deepening fast; the little creeping wind was very chilly.

Margery felt intensely sad and depressed somehow, and now longed greatly to be alone.

In the next moment however Mr. Lynne was speaking again.

"Hark!" he said. "Do you not hear wheels? Dr. Durham is returning rather earlier than usual."

"Yes," Margery answered, in a dull, indifferent tone of voice which, even in her own ears, sounded curiously unlike her own, "and now, Mr. Lynne, we must go in."

So together in the falling twilight they left the dear old orchard, and went indoors in unbroken silence to greet Margery's tired father.

If he was only one half as heartick and weary as she was, thought she—why, that night he must be tired indeed!

The following extracts are taken from the pages of a faded old diary that once belonged to Lady Anne Guest.

"Years ago—knowing that it was in the mind of Margery Durham to put this story together at some future time or other when leisure or inclination should offer for the task—years ago, she, Lady Anne, presented the girl with the written chronicle of that quiet life of hers which was lived so patiently and uncomplainingly at Foxdale Castle, with full permission to read it, and to make use of it in any way whatsoever that might seem right in the eyes of Margery herself."

The fine, delicate handwriting Margery Durham found was almost illegible in places—the pages of the journal were yellowing with age.

Plainly, too, occasionally, a tear had dropped upon the once-wet ink, and, the two having run into one, a word here and there had been blotched and lost.

What were the sad thoughts and musings, Margery wondered, that had called up those quiet tears?

Indeed, there is something peculiarly saddening, one always finds, in looking over a packet of old letters or a diary penned long ago, it may be, by one who, "loved and lost, is gone before."

Something of this "tender melancholy," then—to borrow an expression from hapless "L. E. L." once filled to overflowing the soul of Margery Durham, as she pensively turned the leaves of the Lady Anne's old journal to find the date she sought therein that would facilitate the telling of the tale.

So the extracts from the diary of Lord Beaumanoir's gentle sister carry on the sequence of events.

They follow herewith in due course and order.

(To be continued.)

A THEATRE that will probably rank as one of the most unique buildings in the world is in course of construction at Buenos Ayres. Seating five thousand persons, it has the largest capacity of any building of its kind. By an ingenious architectural arrangement carriages are enabled to deposit persons on the level of the grand tier boxes as well as the box entrances on the ground floor. Elevators will convey patrons of the house to the upper floors. It is the work of but a few minutes to drop the pit and stalls to the cellar, and its place taken by a race track or circus ring. At a greater expense of labour a tank can be erected here for swimming or other aquatic events.

CYNTHIA'S PERIL.

—30—

CHAPTER X.

AND now, for a long time, the past and the future trouble Maud no more. The absorbing anxieties of the present banish both. Every thought of her mind is concentrated on the struggle between life and death, every moment of her time divided between two sick rooms.

Both Herne and the stranger whom he saved from drowning are seriously ill.

The stranger's life is in the greatest peril at first from an attack of brain fever which followed the shock and exhaustion of his struggle in the water; but his vigorous constitution rallies quickly, and when once out of danger, his progress is rapid.

Herne, on the other hand, though he escaped fever, and seems not to have run any great risk, grows weaker and weaker, has long days of prostration almost amounting to insensibility, and suffers constantly from the pain in his side, which makes Dr. Wood look so grave.

Maud and Mrs. Wills, with occasional help from the other servants, take entire charge of the two invalids.

Sometimes Herne is able to interest himself languidly in a book, or will ask to be left alone, and then, if the stranger is sleeping or unconscious, Maud takes up her post by his side and sends her old nurse away for a rest or a little air.

Thus by degrees a new element is introduced in Maud's life—a second change steals over it. She, like Herne, begins to realise that there may be interests beyond the charmed circle of home—people who, though not Penriths, excite sympathy, compassion, and other vague yet pleasant feelings, which Maud's complete seclusion has hitherto given her small opportunity of experiencing.

As she sits—sometimes for a couple of hours together—watching the bed on which her charge lies sleeping, or in a stupor more profound than sleep, Maud speculates much on the past, the future, the character of this stranger, thrown helpless on her hands.

He cannot have known serious trouble yet, she thinks, looking on his face, handsome in feature, and with a certain character of power and energy which not even illness can obliterate.

There are no lines here, such as care and suspense are graving on Herne's more delicate face.

What will this unknown, whose brief visit to their neighbourhood may prove to have cost them so dear, do with the life which Herne has been the human means of giving back to him, perhaps at the cost of his own?

As the last fear crosses Maud's mind, a tear she cannot repress drops on the stranger's hands, extended listlessly on the counterpane, and Maud draws back behind the curtains, fearing discovery, but he only moans a little, murmuring a name which sounds like "Athalie."

Athalie. His wife, his sister, his sweetheart! That one word sets Maud's mind following a very long train of conjectures. There may be many persons waiting with the keenest anxiety for news of this wanderer.

Maud wonders whether they will hear of the accident—the rescue. It was not very likely, for he must have come from a long distance, and be quite a stranger here, or he would never have attempted to ford the mill-stream at the most dangerous point, and after heavy rains.

Poor people! How glad they will be to have him safe back again.

As time passes, and the stranger slowly approaches convalescence, Maud's visits to his room become fewer and more brief, and at last cease altogether. She contents herself with hearing from Mrs. Wills that he begins to sit up a little, next to get up for an hour or so, then to move into the adjoining dressing-room when up; and Maud has that apartment made as comfortable as a sitting-room as its size will allow, and well supplied with flowers and literature.

One day when Herne, who also is mending a

little, has fallen into a sounder sleep than usual, Mrs. Wills appears at the door of his room, and mysteriously beckons Maud into the passage. There she explains herself.

"Miss Maud, my dear, that young gentleman is fretting himself as ill as ever again because he can't write a little. I told him he had no business to think of it, with his arm and hand so bad, but I'm sure he's asked me twenty times for a pen and ink, and, of course, when he got them he couldn't use them. To-day he's been trying with his left hand, and working himself into a regular fever because he couldn't get on. So at last I said I'd ask you to do it for him, and if you don't mind I'll stay with Mr. Herne while you are gone."

Maud cannot refuse. But she complies with a feeling of timidity perplexing to herself; and the bright colour, which grief and watching have lately banished, returns to her cheeks when she enters the room.

"Pray do not move," she says, gently, as the invalid starts from his chair. "I hear you were anxious to send a letter, and I have come to write it for you, if you will allow me."

"How very kind of you! But it is only one of a long series of kindnesses. I am sure I have to thank you for all the things which have made my convalescence so pleasant"—he glances at the flowers and books beside him—"and I have to thank your brother for life itself. I deeply regret that his humanity should have cost him so much."

"I am sure he does not regret it," answers Maud, with an involuntary sigh, as she thinks how great a contrast there is between the two young men.

The stranger, though his voice and attitude still bear traces of severe illness, has eager animation sparkling in his glance and breaking through the lassitude left by fever.

His manner and speech are rather more ornate than those of the average Englishman, but his accent is faultless.

He puzzles Maud a little, and interests her very much.

Arranging writing materials on the table before her, she takes a pen, and waits, as it seems to her, a very long time. Looking up to discover the reason of this delay, she finds the invalid's soft yet penetrating gaze fixed on her face, as though it were the one thing in the world worth contemplating.

"You are my guardian angel," he says, as quietly as though he were speaking to himself. "No, I am not having a relapse into delirium," he continues, laughing, as he sees Maud's look of alarm. "I was wondering what made your face so familiar to me, and then I suddenly remembered that my illness was haunted by dreams of my guardian angel watching over me, and I knew that she had your features."

Maud does not think it necessary to explain that the vision was probably her actual self, seen in the half-consciousness of illness. She only rearranges her writing-case, and says, with a praiseworthy assumption of cool gravity,—

"I have written the date."

"I beg your pardon," he answers, recalling his wandering thoughts with a sigh. "Then we will begin."

"My dear Uncle—"

Then there is another long pause. It would seem that this letter which he was so extremely anxious to send is very difficult to dictate.

"I am ashamed to keep you waiting in this way," he resumes, with a glance at Maud, half playful, half deprecating. "You see I am not accustomed to such a secretary, but I will try to get on:—"

"My dear Uncle,—"

'I hope my silence has not greatly exasperated you. Trying to ford a mill-stream in a thunderstorm, I got into the water at the wrong point; managed to scramble off my horse, which swam ashore, but should certainly never have got out again myself had it not been for the gallant efforts of my host, who not only saved my life at a heavy cost to his own health, but brought me here to be refitted for active

service. I am nearly right again, but I fear I cannot say as much for him."

"You see, Miss Penrith," he says, pausing again, "I am obliged to make as light of the matter as I can to them. Pray do not imagine that for my own part I underrate anything that has been done for me."

"Them," ponders Maud, "I wonder who they are!"

"Do not dream," he goes on dictating, "underline that, please, and make it very emphatic—do not dream of coming to look after me. I assure you I am all but well now, as I shall soon convince you in person."

"Yours truly,

"C. P. HUNTLEY."

"Is that all?" asks Maud, looking up.

"No, not quite," he replies, with some embarrassment. Then, apparently making a tremendous effort, he resumes, "Please add—I hope *Athalie* is well. Don't let her alarm herself about me."

"Oh," thinks Maud, "they say the postscript is always the most important part of a lady's letter. I wonder whether that applies to a gentleman's letter also!"

Then she says, closing her writing-case,—

"I hope you will not hesitate to tell me if there is anything else you want."

"Nothing—nothing at all," replies Mr. Huntley, opening the door towards which she turns, "except—if it is not asking too great a boon—except that you will sometimes allow me to see you."

Maud's sole answer is the stateliest and slightest bow, which may be either negative or affirmative, as her new acquaintance chooses to interpret it.

Next day there is one of those sudden and brief returns of light and warmth which sometimes makes us compare our late autumns to the "Indian summers."

With Doctor Wood's sanction, and aided by a stout stick, Mr. Huntley creeps out to the terrace and suns himself in the glowing atmosphere.

Maud, standing behind the curtains of the open French window in her morning-room, watches his feeble attempts at taking exercise, much like those of a child learning to walk, and thinks how vigorous and graceful his figure must be when he has it fully under control.

Presently standing incautiously near the edge of a flight of steps, and throwing his head back to get a better view of the house, his foot slips. His stick flies from his nervous grasp, and he would inevitably follow it to the turf below, but that Maud springs to his side, and her firm young arm draws him back to safety.

"You see you are really fated to be my guardian angel," he says, sitting down for a moment on the low parapet. "What would have happened to me if you had not been near?"

"A most undesirable fall on that wet grass," answers Maud.

"Add also, a most humiliating one. What an absurd figure I must be crawling about here. What a strange sensation it is to be so helplessly weak."

"I fear you will not get stronger very soon if you are left to yourself. Do you know I think you are very rash, trying to do far too much."

"I want to get strong enough to go away," he answers, with a sigh.

"Back to *Athalie*, I suppose," Maud says to herself. Then aloud, "No doubt you find your imprisonment very tedious."

"It is not that, I assure you, Miss Penrith," he exclaims eagerly. "I could be only well content with such imprisonment for life if—if—" he checks himself, resuming presently in another tone,—

"But apart from my wish to be able to travel—and I am taxing your and your brother's hospitality most unreasonably—I wanted to see something of the house. It is a most interesting place."

"Do you really think so?" asks Maud, with eyes of wonder. "Few strangers see anything attractive in it. Of course it is interesting to us, who were born, and hope to die, here."

"You and your brother must be very fond of it—a home, and an ancestral home."

"Fond!" repeats Maud, resting one pretty hand against the garbled and rugged stems clinging so closely to the old wall beside her, "I think every fibre of our hearts has grown to it, just as the fibres of this ivy penetrate the mortar and cling to the stones. Don't think me childish for speaking so warmly."

"Childish—nothing you could do or say would make me think you childish, much less an enthusiasm with which I sympathize so strongly."

"If you really care so much about the place, and are sure that I shall not bore you with dead and gone Penriths, I will take you into the portrait gallery to-morrow, and introduce you to those ancestors you mentioned just now."

"There is nothing—nothing in this world, that would interest me so much," he answers, warmly.

CHAPTER XI.

MAUD and her patient have made their leisurely inspection of the pictures, accompanied by biographical notes on the originals supplied by Miss Penrith, who is, her auditor assures her, a walking family history.

They have been often interrupted, for nothing in the house, village, or estate seems to go right without frequent appeals to Maud, who is the mainspring of every undertaking.

The rector sends her messages about the very small boys who form the choir, and are trained by her; the mistress of the village school requires her advice; Dr. Wood petitions on behalf of an old invalid labourer; the housekeeper comes with a low curtsy and mysterious whisper; the poultry woman sends inquiries touching the fate of some favourite chickens; the old groom has perplexities about horses and dogs which Mr. Herne cannot be induced to unriddle.

If these applicants disturb Mr. Huntley's study of the pictures, they increase his materials for pursuing another, and perhaps more interesting study—that of Maud herself.

Her ready wit, her unflinching sympathy, her prompt intelligence, her sweet, unselfish temper are unconsciously revealed to him, both in what she does and in what others are clearly accustomed to expect from her.

"Why do you look at me with so much 'speculation in your eye'?" she inquires, laughing and blushing, when they are again alone.

"I was wondering where, how, and why you had acquired such a vast and various amount of information—quite astonishing, at your age."

"I learnt the little I know here by living the home life of a country girl. I am deplorably deficient in most of the things women care about nowadays, and should be plucked disgracefully at Gorton. I have had to study men and women far more than books. My mother died when I was a baby, and my father was so averse to exertion that I had to learn how to take on myself many of the things they would otherwise have done while Herne was at school and college."

"And now, how could Lyndale possibly get on without you?"

"That is what I used to think myself," says the girl, sadly. "Yes; I was vain enough to think it. But it seems probable that Lyndale will have to make the attempt."

She turns away to hide tears that she cannot repress, and presently says, quite cheerfully,—

"There is Mrs. Wills looking for you. You make your appearance at dinner to-night, you know, and I am sure she thinks you ought to be resting now."

A few hours later they all assemble in the drawing-room, for Herne also is able to dress and leave his room—and a very picturesque group they make.

Maud's deep mourning is, of course, unchanged, but she wears some white flowers in her hair and dress, and both are arranged more becomingly than she would have cared to take the trouble of arranging them a little while ago.

Mr. Huntley, though he still keeps his arm in a sling, has the light of returning health in

his dark eyes, and its energy in his spirited bearing.

Herne is extended on a sofa at a short distance, his pale face and deep blue eyes almost feminine in their beauty.

"No," says the visitor, in reply to a question over which Maud has often meditated, and which she has at last found courage to ask—"no, I suppose I must not call myself English. My father, Miss Penrith, was a Canadian, my mother a South American. I was born at Santa Fé, under the roof of a Scottish uncle—the husband of my mother's sister. I can hardly venture to call myself English, can I? Though I wish to do so with an intensity which you, who have been unquestionably English all your life, can hardly comprehend."

"Why not?" asks Maud, looking up at the speaker from her low chair on the other side of the fireplace. "Why should you think me so unpatriotic?"

"Oh, I do not think you so at all. But no one ever realises the full value of a thing unless he wants it and cannot get it, or unless he has it and fears to lose it. Our inalienable possessions are never quite appreciated."

"That is horribly true," mutters Herne.

The stranger's chance hit had gone home to his tenderest point. Rising abruptly, he walks to the other end of the room, and draws aside the curtain from a window out of which it is certain that he can see nothing.

"You must excuse my brother's odd manner," observes Maud, in a low tone. "He has great trouble on his mind which makes him unlike himself."

"Has he? I am sorry. What a world it is! Everyone has something on his mind, I think. I assure you, Miss Penrith, I have a mountain load on mine."

"Indeed," says Maud, with a smile, half arch, half shy. "I should never have suspected it."

"I am glad of it; and I hope to Heaven you may never, never know what it is."

"Why?" whispers the startled girl.

"I cannot tell you. But do you believe, Maud, that I would rather die fifty deaths than add a feather's weight to any trouble of yours or your brother's—your brother, who saved my life?"

Her heart is beating at the sound of her own name in his voice; but she manages to give one swift, questioning glance at his face, and, after what she reads there, says earnestly,—

"I do believe it."

"Thank you. Ah, Miss Penrith, I sometimes wish your brother had left me to my fate before I ever saw your face."

There is a depth of passionate tenderness in his low tone and earnest gaze, before which Maud's blue eyes droop till they are hidden by their dark lashes; and the feather fan she has been holding to screen her face from the fire is turned to hide a richer flush than the fire has ever called up.

"I wonder what his mountain load of trouble can be!" she meditates. "Is it—is it *Athalie*?"

Herne has slowly returned to his sofa, and the couple by the fire are silent. But it is the expressive silence, charged with feeling, which is often sweeter than speech. Such moments are always short. Maud is told that she is wanted in the study.

"A lady and gentleman have just arrived, ma'am," says old Frost, when he has closed the drawing-room door behind his mistress. "They are friends of Mr. Huntley's, but I wasn't to mention them before him till they knew exactly how he was."

Athalie! For a moment Maud's heart seems to stand still. She longs to say "I will not see them," and rush to her own room to hide the tumult of her conflicting feelings.

But she is brave, and she has not the faintest intention of giving way, however much she may long to do so.

In the few seconds which pass before Frost throws open the study door her composure is entirely restored.

A gentleman, middle-aged, stout, with an air of rather ponderous gravity, and a shrewd,

kindly face, stands on the hearthrug—a lady by his side.

Is it a lady? A living woman, or a tropical bird or flower? Practical and sedate though Maud generally is, this fanciful question flashes across her mind as she looks at the bright, girlish creature, small and slight, but instinct with ardent life, like a butterfly spreading its wings for flight, or a flower opening to the sun.

She has thrown aside her heavy fur cloak, and her white fingers, lightly clasped together and sparkling with gems; her rich hued velvet dress and hat, her brilliant eyes, and mouth like a crimson rosebud, all gleam in the lamplight and firelight.

The father bows low to Maud, and advances with cumbrous courtesy.

The daughter springs to her side, puts one tiny hand appealingly on her arm, and looks up into her face with sweet shining eyes.

"I trust you will pardon our intrusion, Miss Penrith. We had, I am aware, no right whatever to trouble you. But my daughter insisted on coming."

"Yes, I would come. Can you wonder? It seemed so shocking, so heartless, after Cedric's terrible accident to sit quietly waiting for letters, and then, though you were so kind in writing for him—was it not you?—I could not feel quite sure that he allowed us to know exactly how he was."

They both addressed Maud at once, and as she glances from one to the other she feels no surprise that the stolid, methodical father is led where she will by his impulsive little fairy of a daughter.

For a single moment she hesitates before answering. A spasm of jealous anger contracts her heart as she notices the little air of appropriation with which the girl speaks of Cedric Huntley. Is it to be ever thus?

Is everyone who is most dear to her to have closer and stronger ties? Why should this radiant creature come between her and her short happiness? Did not Mr. Huntley himself desire her not to come?

The temptation to send away her unwelcome guests is conquered as soon as it is recognised. She will take them straight to the room where she left Cedric.

If Athalie had any claim upon him, if it can possibly be that he loves her, thinks poor Maud, shrinking from the depth of self-deception this *dénouement* would reveal in her own heart it will be better to know the worst at once.

"Mr. Huntley has indeed been in some danger," she says quietly; "but he is quite convalescent, as you shall see for yourselves. Only it is not thought desirable for him to travel at present."

"And your brother, Miss Penrith—your brother, to whom we owe Cedric's life?" asks the girl's soft voice.

"He also is better," Maud replied, wholly unable to free her own voice from an accent of constraint. "Will you be kind enough to come with me?"

Then she leads the way to the drawing-room, and they enter it together. Maud, pale and grave, in her sweeping black robes, Athalie fluttering by her side like a humming bird—all bright colours, and bright cheeks, and bright tearful eyes.

Cedric Huntley, leaning against the fireplace, where Maud had left him, looks up when the door opens, and stifling an exclamation of impatient dismay, steps forward to receive the unexpected visitors with as good grace as he can summon up.

But Athalie does not notice the cousin about whose welfare she was so concerned a moment ago. Her eyes are fixed on Herne, who, lying pale and motionless on the sofa, does not even unclose his own. He thinks the opening door has only readmitted Maud.

He knows nothing, hears nothing, till Athalie, after a moment's amazed, incredulous gaze, has flown to his side and exclaimed, all her anger scattered to the winds by the sight of his altered face,—

"And you also have been ill—suffering! Tell

me, was that why you kept silent so long? But your silence nearly broke my heart."

CHAPTER XII.

It would be hard to say which of the party is most startled by this recognition.

With the lovers, indeed, surprise is lost in happiness. Herne forgets the difficult explanations which have yet to be made in the bliss of seeing her to whom he must presently make them.

Athalie Edell, or Firefly, as her friends love best to call her, forgets even the illness and suffering stamped on Herne's face in the joy of looking on that face again.

Cedric and Maud dare not meet each other's eyes lest even looks should speak too plainly at such a moment; but in each heart a wild, half-confessed hope is dawning, strangely compounded, as yet, of both pain and pleasure.

Mr. Edell alone—who has long passed the age when the language of the eyes is eloquent—seems inclined to prefer the conventional mode of communication. One or two loud preliminary coughs he gives, to recall the scattered senses of the young people. Then finding these of no avail,—

"Athalie, my dear," he observes, "this is very remarkable and puzzling. You did not inform me that you had any previous knowledge of this young gentleman."

"Papa, how could I? I did not for a moment dream that I should see him. I suppose," she adds, rising to her feet, and turning a little from Herne's couch, but not withdrawing her hand from his clinging clasp, "I suppose you have guessed that this is the friend whom I met at the Hôtel Crèvecoeur, about whom I told you everything—Mr. Farrant Copley."

"Mr. Farrant Copley, child! you must be under some strange delusion. This is Mr. Penrith—unless I am greatly mistaken—Mr. Herne Penrith, beneath whose roof we are at present, and who saved your cousin Cedric's life."

"It is so, indeed," says Maud, going forward to answer the look of intense and perplexed inquiry on the girl's face, while Herne, with a groan, sinks back among the cushions of the sofa.

Maud feels much more tender sympathy for the new-comer now she knows that the Athalie of Cedric Huntley's letter and the Firefly of Herne's story are one and the same.

"It is so, indeed. When you first saw my brother he was travelling with Farrant Copley, and your aunt, Mrs. Ligonier, concluded that he must be her old friend's son, because, like her, he was dark. The two young men did not deceive her. In just they changed places for a time, but they intended to explain themselves fully on the very day that they were suddenly recalled to England by my father's illness."

Firefly's colour comes and goes rapidly while Maud is speaking. Once she tries to draw her hand from Herne's, but she cannot resist his fond detaining clasp, and the sad entreaty of his eyes.

"It was cruel to deceive me," she says, tremulously, "cruel and needless."

"Have not I been punished?" whispers Herne. "Dearest, I wished to gain your heart as a poor man—you know what first made me think of that, and hour by hour, as my feelings became more deeply engaged, I found it more difficult to make my confession."

"But," asks Firefly, "if you really cared for me why did you not write, as you promised?" She does not speak in whispers. Her voice, though low and agitated, is very clear. She is desperate now; everyone may know, must know, where her heart lies.

"I could not write by my father's deathbed. Then, when I came to examine his papers, I found reason to fear that instead of being the rich man I had supposed myself I was a beggar. I had no right to claim you then, especially as I had bound you by no engagement. This I am sure your father will admit."

Edell thus appealed to, bows formally to

Herne, but looks singularly puzzled and disturbed.

"Sir," he says loftily, "you acted as a gentleman and a man of honour. But this is altogether the most curious and remarkable series of coincidences—the most peculiar state of affairs that ever came under my cognisance. I—I really am at loss to perceive how to shape my conduct under the circumstances. What you mean us to understand, Mr. Penrith, is, I presume, that you are threatened with the loss of your estates in consequence of a claimant having appeared who professes to stand before you in the succession."

"Precisely," says Herne, astounded by Mr. Edell's accurate acquaintance with his family history.

"Very well; what complicates matters so remarkably is that my nephew, Cedric Huntley Penrith—commonly known as Huntley—is that claimant."

"Is it possible," exclaims Herne, "and—"

"You," says Maud, while Cedric answers her in a low tone, "Remember your promise always to believe in me."

"I did not know one single word of this!" says Firefly, impetuously. "Everyone has secrets from me. Cedric, were you going to claim the property of the man who saved your life?"

"No, Athalie, I was not," answers her cousin, quietly. "I intended, knowing how much I owed to Herne Penrith and his sister—with one swift glance at Maud's pale down cast face—"I intended to tell your father that I must abandon the claim he at one time very naturally urged me to make, and which we came to England to establish. We did not acquaint you with our chief reason for coming—not, of course, because we had the faintest idea that Herne Penrith was an old friend of yours"—surely Cedric may be excused if his tone here was tinged with sarcasm—"but because it did not seem worth while to trouble you with the story till we knew the sequel."

"And also, my dear," interposes her father, "because we thought your romantic notions would lead you to disapprove of the whole thing."

"Had you not come here," resumes Cedric, "contrary to my express wish, Mr. Penrith would never have heard any more of the Canadian claimant—never have known that it was his distant cousin and possible rival whom he dragged out of the mill-stream."

"That was kindly meant," replies Herne, who had risen now, and speaks with more firmness and dignity than hitherto, "but quite impossible to carry out. If your claim is well-founded—"

"There can be no doubt of that," interrupts Mr. Edell. "We have documents in abundance showing unmistakably that my sister's husband (my wife's sister, to speak with strict accuracy) was the son and heir of Wyndham Penrith, second son of Herne Huntley Penrith of Lyndale. Wyndham Penrith's elder brother survived him, and as he had not maintained any communication with his family, his son never knew that the elder brother left no children, and that the then supposed Penrith of Lyndale (your grandfather, Mr. Herne) was the third son. Nor should we ever have known anything about it but that an English lawyer found us out and gave us the information. It was remarkable that he should have done so, as in Canada the Penriths had dropped the family name, and used that of Huntley."

"The lawyer in question was a Mr. Hallett, was he not?" asks Herne.

"Yes, he was."

"Hallett came from this neighbourhood, and as Huntley is also one of our family names that would give him a clue."

"You were riding over here to look at the old home, I suppose," continues Herne, addressing Cedric, "when you missed the ford in the storm?"

"That was what I intended."

"Well, it is your own now, if you can satisfy my solicitor, Mr. Burnett, with these documents. We will have no lawsuit."

"Do you all mean?" asks Firefly, who has

been listening eagerly, intently, her eyes fastened on each speaker in turn, as though to read in their faces the utmost thoughts of their hearts, "do you all mean that Cedric will have Herne's fortune? Well, but Herne will have Cedric's promised wife—that is, if he will take her. Herne, when your long silence, and what I thought your desertion, had driven me almost frantic, I agreed to marry my cousin—never expecting to see your face again. It was your fault, but I forgive you now, for after all I shall marry a poor man, and be everything in the world to him—shall I not, Cedric?" turning to her cousin with the prettiest air of mingled penitence and archness. "Am I forgiven? It is better to have me for a good cousin than a bad wife; and I don't believe that, in your heart of hearts, you really loved me—more than I loved you."

"You are settling everything much to your own satisfaction, no doubt, Athalia," says Mr. Edsell, with some irritation. "You seem to take my consent entirely for granted."

"Of course I do, papa. You will be immeasurably the gainer. Cedric was always as a son to you, and now you will have two sons instead of one."

The "two sons" and their prospective father look at each other rather doubtfully, possibly feeling somewhat awkward as to the details involved in their new relationship.

There is an embarrassing pause, broken—oh, thrice blessed conventionality! kind current of daily life, which we are so prone to find fault with, but which is often such a relief in high strung moments!—broken by the sound of the dinner-bell, which chimes its prosaic accompaniment to so many emotions.

"Miss Edsell," says Maud, "let me take you to your room. Herne, will you see that Mr. Edsell has all he requires?"

"I assure you, my dear young lady, we have no intention of encroaching on your kindness. Our luggage is at Felamborough, where we have ordered rooms, and whence we brought our carriage."

"Then allow me to send the carriage back with word that the rooms will not be wanted. One of the servants shall go with it and bring your trunks. Indeed, Mr. Edsell, your daughter and you cannot leave us at this hour."

"I am not coming, papa," observes Firefly, calmly. "Don't you think you had better stay here with me?"

So Miss Edsell and her father make a satisfactory toilet as they can in such a position, and Mr. Edsell takes his young hostess in to dinner, and all the usual routine is gone through as methodically as though they were friends who had assembled in the ordinary way, instead of five people whose meeting is the crisis of their lives.

Afterwards, while Mr. Edsell—who is much attracted by Maud—talks to her and Cedric at the fireside, Firefly, followed by Herne, walks to the oriel window, that window at which, a few hours before, he had placed himself to conceal such different feelings, and drawing aside the curtains, reclines in the cushioned recess.

"This moonlight is bright enough to remind one of the Hôtel Crèvecoeur," she says, softly; "and that belt of dark trees—Scotch firs, are they not?—might pass for our beloved pines, at this distance."

"How happy we were then."

"And how happy we will always be together," adds the girl, quickly.

"Firefly, you are certain that you will never regret having thrown over the rich man for the poor one?"

"Never, never. My only regret is that I could have been weak enough to accept Cedric when my heart was yours. But I was blinded by pain."

"My poor darling!—and I suppose I was blinded by pride."

"It is just as well that we both have something to forgive," says Firefly, smiling through her tears. "That sort of thing ought never to be all on one side. How strangely it has come about! When my father told me that Cedric was staying in the house of a Mr. Penrith, I thought it was your friend, and that I might

perhaps hear of you; and, angry though I was with you then, I am afraid it was that hope, quite as much as anxiety about Cedric, which made me insist on coming here."

Then, after a few moments of happy silence, Firefly suddenly asks,—

"What has become of the real Farrant Copley, Herne? I used to think he loved Cynthia."

"So he did. He meant to tell her so when I made my confession to you—and the same cause prevented him, for he would not desert me in my great trouble."

"Why did he never write to her?"

"He was pledged to keep his share in our secret till I was at liberty to disclose mine. When I believed that all hope was over for me, I released him from his promise, but it was then too late to write. Since that time I think he has been looking for Cynthia all over Europe."

"He might easily fail to find her there, as we are Canadians. Do you think he loves her still?"

"As truly as I love you. He is not the man to change."

CHAPTER XIII.

PERHAPS if Herne Penrith could have had a bird's-eye view of his friend at that moment he might not have spoken quite so confidently of his unchanging fidelity.

The moon by whose light Firefly and her lover discuss Farrant Copley, sees him sitting amongst the orange-trees of Nice—not alone.

He is beginning to despair of finding Cynthia, and in the sickness of hope deferred he sometimes wonders whether, if they do meet, it will be a happy meeting; whether she still remembers him; whether she will forgive the deception under which he chafed even at the time, and which, when looked back upon, seems unutterably foolish and reprehensible.

Then, on all this self-tormenting reflection falls the soothing influence of another woman, from whom he has had no concealments, and fears no censure.

And sometimes Farrant Copley thinks that this love chase of his will end like the *amours de voyage*, and quotes to himself,—

"Hither and thither inquiring. I weary of making inquiries."

I am ashamed, I declare, of asking people about it."

He has wandered back to the Riviera, hoping that Cynthia and her party might also have been led to return, as almost all do who have ever tasted its enchantments. He hurries from spot to spot in search of some trace, some clue which may bring him once more face to face with the idol of his dreams—in vain. He even revisits the Hôtel Crèvecoeur, but nothing has been heard there of Mrs. Ligonier and her nieces, and he soon flies from the place where he finds nothing but memories.

Taking Nice on his homeward way he fell in with some people whom he knew—a brother artist, his wife and sister. He becomes more intimate with them in a few days here than during the years of their London acquaintance—and it is the sister, Nora Gresham, with whom he is now sitting.

"Mrs. Gresham, in one of the rooms opening on the gardens, is singing the sweet plaintive old romance—*Un destiné invidioso*. As the last notes die away on the perfumed air, Farrant Copley turns to the girl sitting motionless beside him, and looking very fair in the softened light, and asks abruptly,—

"Do you think a man is bound always to remain faithful to a hopeless attachment, Miss Gresham?"

She starts and colours. "I really cannot answer so wide a question," she says. "Circumstances alter cases, you know."

"Well, I mean this: Suppose a man to have been very genuinely in love, but to find after a time—after every effort—that he might as well cry for the moon. Would he have a fair chance of being happy himself, and making another happy, by yielding to a new interest which might have a different end?"

"How can I tell, Mr. Copley? So much would depend on the disposition of the man himself. And then as to the woman he first loved, what of her?"

"Suppose he has quite lost sight of her; suppose he has sought her, month after month, in vain, is he to spend years in the pursuit, which may extend over his whole life just as fruitlessly? Or may he not settle down with some one who will brighten that life and give a purpose to his work? Would a good woman consent, do you suppose, to play the Samaritan for his benefit, and pour oil on his wounds?"

"It would greatly depend on the state of the wounds, I should think," answers Miss Gresham. "If they showed any signs of healing—if they were not likely to bleed afresh at the approach of the one who inflicted them (the other love) I think she might venture—"

But Farrant Copley does not hear her. His attention is riveted on a carriage which has drawn up at the entrance a few yards beyond the spot where they are sitting.

Servants who throng round are helping a very feeble invalid, smothered in furs and travelling wraps, to descend; but he will not allow anyone to assist him further till he has the arm of a lady who follows—tall and slender, indescribably graceful in every movement. She is not a second in overtaking the traveller, but he asks, querulously, "How long do you mean to keep me waiting here, and you know I am tired to death!"

"I hope you will rest comfortably now that we have finished our journey," she answers, gently.

And then Farrant Copley abruptly rises from his chair, exclaiming, "Cynthia's voice! I knew, I was certain it must be she!" and hurries up to the carriage, only in time to see its late occupants disappear in a suite of rooms to the left of the grand staircase.

"I felt sure it was his own case he was putting," reflects Nora Gresham, as she picks up her bouquet and gloves, and rejoins her sister-in-law. "And that must be the 'other love.' I think she reappeared just in time!"

The next few days Farrant Copley seems to himself to spend in one prolonged watch. The new-comers do not frequent the *table d'hôte* or the drawing-rooms. But not a door opens, not a step is heard in the corridors, not a creature enters or leaves the house without his hoping that fate has smiled at last, and it is Cynthia. Meanwhile, to unenlightened eyes, he seems to spend his time as much as usual. He cannot, of course, break off his intimacy with the Greshams; so, though devoured with anxiety for Cynthia's reappearance, he walks and rides as often as before with Nora, little dreaming that Cynthia's eyes follow him from behind the closed *persiennes* of an artificially-heated room; that Cynthia, wearing herself out in close attendance on a fretful, selfish, exacting valuerudinarian, sees him bestowing on another the attentions which once were hers, and thinks how easily she has been superseded; that Cynthia, long after the other occupants of the hotel have been wrapped in slumber, toses on a tear-sprinkled pillow, and asks,—

"Oh, why, why did we come here? Why was I doomed to see him again, just as I had begun to reconcile myself to losing him?"

It is one of the most appalling things in life that such a trifle as the thickness of a brick wall, or the distance of a few miles, or merely the habit of looking at one thing when we mean another, may sever us from happiness for ever.

At last Farrant Copley can bear the suspense no longer. After all these months of seeking and separation, of longing and regret, to find himself under the same roof as Cynthia, and yet not meet her, is maddening.

If no opportunity is given him he will make one. Accordingly he stops a waiter who is leaving the rooms which he knows contain her, saying,—

"Take my card to Miss Ligonier, and ask if I may see her for five minutes."

The man listens deferentially, and shakes his head.

"There is no *Monsieur Ligonier* in the hotel, monsieur."

"Nonsense, there is. I know her quite well. I saw her arrive with an invalid gentleman. They occupy the rooms you just left."

"Those are Monsieur and Madame Ligonier. There is no *demoiselle* with them. Shall I call their servant? He will tell monsieur that I am correct."

Mr. Copley does not wish to see their servant—he is angry, incredulous, indignant.

"Will monsieur come and speak to the secretary? He will tell monsieur that the rooms—six rooms *en suite*—were engaged for Monsieur and Madame Ligonier a month ago."

So he blindly follows the waiter to the secretary's document-lined cage, and hears the same story, with many details.

"Yes, the rooms were taken a month ago, but monsieur is a great invalid—oh, *terrible*!—and could not travel till the other day. Madame is most devoted, she never leaves him for a single instant. There is no *jeune demoiselle* with them, *mais assurément non*!"

Married! Farrant Copley goes into the garden, cool and fragrant with rising dew, that one word ringing in his ears the knell of all his hopes.

Strange to say, he had never thought of that contingency, amidst all his fears. Sometimes a wild fancy had visited him that Cynthia might be dead; often had he imagined her forgetful. But never had he pictured her married.

Mrs. Ligonier—a great invalid. He sees it all plainly enough now. Of course she has married the cousin whose portrait he gave back to her—who was in Madeira, and whom she feared never to see again.

He remembers her agitation, her delight at recovering the locket; and marvels at his own blind folly in never anticipating an event which would seem almost to have been pointed out to him.

"Perhaps it is better, after all, to know the worst," he thinks.

And he resolves to leave Nice next morning—to hazard no chance now of beholding the face he can never see unmoved.

Then, having made this wild resolution, as soon as twilight closes, he paces up and down the garden walks, within sight of her windows, to catch a glimpse if it be but of her shadow on the blind once more, false, heartless, though she be.

False, heartless—and to what? An idea—an emotion—a dream. He had never spoken, never bound her by any promise. But in vain he tries to reason away his anger and despair.

"She *knew* I loved her!" his heart cries. "And if she had ever loved me, she could not have married another!"

Night has fallen, and still Farrant Copley lingers, taking a long farewell of all his hopes, and of the rooms which enclose the only woman he has ever loved. They open to a flagged walk, connected with the garden by a few steps.

As he gazes—is there sometimes a compelling, a magnetic power in intense thought!—one window is gently raised, and Cynthia, paler and more shadowy than of old, pauses a moment, glances round, then comes out, and moves noiselessly along the walk, and into the garden.

An angle of the building has hitherto concealed Farrant Copley from her, but as she passes into the flood of moonlight silencing the green sward she sees him.

Their eyes meet, and she passes with a bow cold and distant as his own.

It is over—the meeting to which both have looked forward to, which both have pictured in a hundred different ways, none like this.

Not quite over; involuntarily both look round. Then Cynthia turns back with extended hand, saying, tremulously,—

"Why should we not be friends?"

"That is impossible, Mrs. Ligonier," says Farrant Copley. "We were more than friends once, and henceforward we must be less."

"Mrs. Ligonier!" repeats Cynthia, in blank astonishment; "what can you mean? What are you thinking of?"

"Of your husband," he says, bitterly; "whom you have just left."

For a moment she is silent in amazement too great for words. Then a light begins to dawn on her—a light of comprehension—a light of possible happiness. "Are you speaking of Mr. Ligonier?" she asks, gently.

"Certainly I am. Your cousin, I presume—your husband, I am told."

"Mr. Ligonier, with whom I came here, is my uncle."

"Cynthia! And you are not married? The people here said that your rooms were taken for Monsieur and Madame Ligonier."

"So they were. For Aunt Ella, whom you know, and her husband. But she was disinclined for the journey when the time came, and at the last moment I took her place."

"I never knew she had a husband living."

"She is not much with him. He is a confirmed invalid—like his son," she adds, with a sweet, shy smile, "and my aunt is fond of change and society."

"Cynthia," cries Farrant Copley, scarcely daring to believe what he sees and hears, "heaven grant that I may not wake and find that I have only dreamt of happiness! I have been seeking you all over Europe, and now feared that I had discovered you only to find you doubly lost to me. But now I never will, I never need lose you again—need I?"

He has taken her hand in his, and she makes no attempt to withdraw it. "Is this mine?" he whispers.

"Yours," Cynthia replies, "for ever."

For the time her lover has forgotten all about his terrible confession. But presently it recurs to him. "There is something I ought to have told you," he says hurriedly. "You have been deceived in me. I am not the rich man you supposed me. And you used to say you would not marry a poor one."

"That was before my heart woke," she answers. "Firefly was right. If you were a beggar I would marry you—provided you thought you could beg better for two than for one!"

"And if I had been a rich man?"

"My answer would have been the same. I know now that the only equivalent for love is—love."

CHAPTER XIV.

TIME has passed on—autumn has deepened into winter; unmistakable winter in England, where he assumes his ordinary garb of snow, with jewels of crystal.

But in Nice there is little save the name of the month to mark the progress of the year, and perpetual spring reigns in two loving hearts.

Cynthia and Farrant Copley have no small quarrels, no hot and cold fits. They suffered too much during the separation which both feared would be final not to guard jealously the perfect happiness of every moment of reunion.

And they are not going to risk any more partings. They have wrung from Mr. Ligonier a reluctant consent to his niece's marriage here, under the sunny skies which suit him so well; and his wife has joined the party, to superintend the very quiet and simple preparations, and to take Cynthia's place when the young couple depart for that lengthened tour which is finally to restore them "to England with the violets."

It took some little time and trouble to smooth Aunt Ella's ruffled plumage when she learnt the mystification which had been practised upon her.

But Cynthia's betrothed had been an exceeding favourite of hers as Herne Penrith, and, under his real name, he succeeded after a time in re-establishing himself in her good graces.

Perhaps the tidings that Herne Penrith was no longer Penrith of Lyndale, taken in conjunction with some confidential communications from Farrant Copley as to the profits of art (when smiled upon by fashion) in England, went far to reconcile Mrs. Ligonier to her niece's prospects.

At all events, reconciled she is at last.

All minor details are settled, the eve of the

wedding has arrived, and Cynthia, in her aunt's dressing-room, is honouring her by putting on, for final criticism, the white roses and veil she will wear to-morrow.

She is gazing abstractedly through the window thrown open to admit the sunny air, on the terrace where she and Farrant had their moonlight meeting and reconciliation, when a footstep behind makes her look round, and she finds that her aunt has gone into the adjoining room, and her lover has entered.

"Farrant—you have come back! Oh, how glad I am! You seem to have left me for an age."

"My love! so short an absence! It is the last, Cynthia. I shall never leave you again, unless you send me away."

"That is not very likely."

"But you do not ask the reason of my mysterious journey."

"I do not care about it. I am only thankful it is over."

His answer seems irrelevant.

"There is one thing wanting to complete that costume, Cynthia," he says, looking at her with fond admiration.

"Yes, I know; orange blossoms," she answers, blushing. "But I mean to wear real flowers."

"And I have brought them for you from the Crèvecoeur Gardens, where I saw you first," he says, holding up an immense cluster of fragrant pearly blossoms. "This is what I went away for."

Cynthia's thanks are silent but expressive.

"And was it my absence that made you grow so pale and worn?" asks Farrant, looking anxiously at the sweet face resting on his shoulder.

"Not that alone. I am strangely depressed—I feel as though some dark shadow hung over me which would soon fall and shut out light and hope."

"My dear one, these are but nervous fancies. You have been attending too closely on your uncle. I will take you away from all shadows to-morrow."

Cynthia sighs.

"I think I shall be too happy," she whispers, softly. "I have not deserved my happiness. Some sorrow I have caused must be oppressing me, just as curses are said to fly home, you know."

"Do not yield to such thoughts, my dearest. Let me drive them away."

"They are going now that you have come back," she answers, smiling up at him. "Hark! there is the gong—you must go. I shall not come to dinner to-night. Here are some English letters for you to read. Firefly and Herne will most likely join us in Naples. Will not that be pleasant?"

"Not so pleasant as having you entirely, exclusively to myself."

"There will be time for that too. Now you must, *must* go. You will find me on the terrace after dinner, when I have changed my dress."

"*A rivederci*," he says, with a lingering embrace, and then Cynthia is left alone.

The dinner is longer, duller, more tedious than ever, thinks Farrant Copley, who is impatient to return to his beloved. But Mr. Ligonier is able to appear at the *table d'hôte* now, and Farrant sits between him and Mrs. Ligonier, and does his best to entertain the uncle and aunt of his betrothed.

The longest, dullest, most tedious things come to an end at last, and the guests are about to rise from table, when loud and repeated screams echo through the hôtel. Farrant knows too well whence they proceed—from the room where he left Cynthia; but not from Cynthia herself. Her voice will never again be heard on earth, in sorrow or in joy.

They find her lying back motionless in a large arm-chair, the bridal veil falling round her, the orange blossoms Farrant brought her scattered as if in mockery over her drooping head, her rigid hands.

In her side is thrust a slender poniard; a slip of paper twisted round its handle bears the words: "A wedding gift from Giulio Malepina."

The blow must have been sudden, swift, and

sure. No groan or cry gave warning of what had happened, till Mrs. Ligonier's maid, going to help Cynthia to take off her wedding dress, found her insensible.

Count Malespina went, as he had come, unnoticed and undiscovered. In Nice he could easily learn all the current gossip about the Ligoniers, without their even knowing that he was near them.

News of the approaching wedding would be the first thing to reach his ears, and bring on an access of that maniac fury which once before nearly cost Cynthia her life.

A great show of pursuit and investigation is made, but Italian officials are not above suspicion, and great families can sometimes secure immunity for great crimes.

Two years later, Farrant Copley visiting a lonely monastery amongst the mountains, occupied by a community of Trappists, sees in its wild garden one of the brothers digging his own grave. Wan, haggard, emaciated, though the monk has become, he instantly recognised the face, lifted for a moment from its dreary task.

And the monk knows him. With a low shuddering cry he drops the tools he has been using, and wrings his hands in passionate entreaty.

"Do not come here to accuse me!" he cries, wildly, "my own heart does that. Day and night, night and day, it says, 'Murderer, murderer! The curse of Cain is on you!' It never lets me sleep, it never lets me rest."

"Then it is well that I have come," says Farrant Copley, not unkindly. "Have you repented your wicked act?"

"Repented! If you only knew! If you could read my heart! With tears of blood I have repented. If I could recall Cynthia to life I would lay down my own life again and again—how gladly! But her avenging angel follows me. She stands by my bedside and prohibits sleep, she dashes the cup from my lips when I thirst. She beckons, and in a little while I shall follow her."

"That is not Cynthia, it is but a phantom of your brain," replies Farrant. "You left Cynthia wounded and insensible, but, thank Heaven, not dead. She recovered. She is my dear wife. She forgives you as I do."

"She lives! She forgives me! Oh, Heaven be thanked, indeed! Now I can rest, now I can die in peace!" and before Farrant Copley knows what he is doing, Malespina has caught his hands and covered them with wild kisses and hot tears.

The attempted tragedy at Nice for some time postponed all thought of wedding festivities at Lyndale. But when spring is well advanced and news arrives of Cynthia's sure though slow recovery, Lyndale church, where so many Penriths are laid to rest, sees three of their descendants married. For Cedric has persuaded Maud that if it were possible for Lyndale to do without her, it is impossible that its new master should. And it is arranged that when Firefly and Herne return with Mr. Kedell to their Canadian home, Maud will remain behind.

"So you see, nurse, I was right after all," whispers the happy girl, during a twilight conference in the old nursery. "You laughed at me, you know, but I shall always be Maud Penrith, and I shall live and die at Lyndale."

[THE END.]

COMMEMORATIVE bronze tablets are to be set up in Edinburgh, through the exertions of the Pen and Pencil Club, to mark the abodes of the eminent men who have lived there. The first will soon be erected on the house at Lady Stairs's close, where Burns lodged. Others are ready to mark the dwelling-places of Adam Smith and Lord Brougham, Hugh Miller, Thomas Chalmers, Dugald Stewart, Francis Jeffrey, and John Napier of Merchiston, the inventor of logarithms, will be commemorated in like manner.

THE chiffonniers of Paris are fast disappearing, having lost their occupation. The waste and dirt from every house used to be poured out into the street before the front door each evening at nine or ten o'clock, and the chiffonnier, with his lantern and his hook in his hands and his basket on his back arrived at once and raked the heaps over, to see what he could find in them. But it became forbidden either to throw the refuse into the street, or to bring it out at night; it must be carried down in the early morning in a box, which is placed, full, at the door, and is emptied before nine o'clock into the dust carts, which go round each day. The chiffonniers, therefore, have no longer the opportunity of picking over the dirt, for it has ceased to offer itself in an accessible form; they have, for the most part, to carry on their trade after the refuse is discharged from the carts at the dépôts, and, consequently, have almost disappeared from the streets.

EVEN common house-flies have a deadly energy—a parasite that fastens upon their bodies. Their favourite location is around the wings and the shoulders. These tiny creatures grow rapidly, and soon become so full of blood as to be perceptible to the naked eye. They soon exhaust the source of supply and leave the wretched victim little more than a shell, when it crawls away to die. Any one may discover this condition of affairs by observing that flies become dull and semi-stupid. They seem to fly heavily, and soon alight and begin brushing and scraping their bodies with their wings and feet. But to no purpose are all their efforts, for the leech never lets go. These parasites are very much worse in some seasons than in others. Occasionally there is a summer when they are very few, and one may look a long time without finding any. At other times, in certain localities, they almost sweep the flies out of existence. Such a condition is thought to be fraught with danger to the human family.

In the swamps and woods that cover the southern end of Barnegat beach in South Jersey a breed of cats peculiar to Jersey alone exists. They are not only tailless, but their hind legs are longer than their front ones, giving them the appearance of rabbits. This curious species of felines has been resident on the island for many years. Over half a century ago an English bark came ashore on Barnegat's shoals, and among the things that managed to reach the beach were a number of Manx cats. These animals are found only on the Isle of Man and are without tails. For a little while the cats remained around the Barnegat lighthouse, but the keeper, becoming tired of their pilferings and inharmonious concerts at night, drove them away. They took to the dense woods and thickets, where they soon multiplied very rapidly. During the winter months the swamps are visited by thousands of birds in search of food, and the tailless cats manage to live very nicely. Efforts to tame the felines have met with some success, and the cats make nice pets. During several winters, when the intense cold kept the birds away from Barnegat, the cats depended on the surf clams for food. The clams were thrown on shore by the waves, and becoming frozen opened their shells, making it an easy matter for the animals to secure the contents. Years of life in the woods have made them both wild and savage, and they could make a formidable stand against anyone who hunts them. These strange animals have become expert as fishers, and often in warm weather, when the surf is full of fish, go into the shallow water and, as a wave recedes, leaving the fish floundering in a few inches of water, fasten their claws in its sides and drag it beyond the reach of the incoming waves. The animals present a curious appearance, as they jump about much as a kangaroo does. They are expert climbers, and have been known to raise their young in hollow trees far above the ground. Several years ago a strange disease attacked and killed many of the animals, but they soon increased to their former numbers again. In colour the tailless cats resemble our domestic tiger feline, but in size they are much smaller. Their fur is coarser and longer than that found on our own tabby cats.

THE susceptibility of certain persons to ivy poison is one of the curious eccentricities of the human system that the medical profession frequently has to encounter. Many persons are not in the least affected by it, while others cannot go anywhere in its vicinity without feeling the injurious effects. One instance of extreme susceptibility is given where a brush-pile was burning when a stranger, passing by, was poisoned by the floating smoke, and broke out in a rash with violent itching all over the face and hands. In another case, some old stakes and rubbish that had been left on a brush-pile for years were removed, when the labourer was severely attacked with this difficulty, the eyes being almost closed from the swelling of the face. This poison is somewhat eccentric in its action, and its victims never know just what course it may take. It sometimes makes its appearance on one arm or one ankle, and may appear in several succeeding years at about the same date. Sometimes it is a permanent tenant, breaking out all over the body whenever the system has been over-heated. Again, it will form tiny specks just under the skin, and after a few days showing a small red middle and a slightly raised rim, which comes off and brings a little hard speck with it. The itching is almost intolerable, and nothing yet invented or discovered by medical science is able to afford relief.

THE perfumes which are most agreeable to the senses are not always the most helpful to the nerve. Ambergris, for instance, is positively offensive to many, yet it is said to possess a wonderful power of clearing the brain and driving away those evil spirits known as the "blues." On the other hand, attar of roses, with its suggestion of glowing suns and gorgeous Eastern colours, predisposes one to tears. A faint odour of musk acts as a tonic, while civet brings drowsiness of soul, for which the best antidote is the pungent odour of sandal wood; the fragrance of citron and aloes wood is as soothing to nervous people as far-off music. Many perfumes, delightful in the open air, become particularly disagreeable in a close room. A whole evening can be spoiled by the presence of tuberose or lilies in a reception room. Their strong fragrance has a very bad effect. Magnolia blossoms, too, have a delightful perfume in their native grove, but woe to her who sleeps through the night with a single blossom on her pillow. There are many fragrant flowers, such as carnation, clove pink, sweetbrier, and apple blossom, that are as beneficial as they are sweet-scented. A vivid perfume is nearly always bracing, while a subtle one is generally enervating. One may become positively intoxicated through inhaling the odour of the peach, almond, wild cherry, and other blossoms of the same class, because they all contain a suggestion of prussic acid.

STARFISH destroy hundreds of pounds' worth of oysters in a year; the men who make a business of cultivating the oyster are continually fighting this enemy. The oyster-seed is sown on empty shells spread on the land under water that the oystermen own, and is as carefully cultivated and cared for as any fruit or vegetable that requires special cultivation is cared for in a garden. The oysters deposit their spawn, or young, on the shells. The starfish eat the spawn. Formerly the oystermen went over the beds with an oyster-rake. By this method they destroyed so many oysters that it was found best not to pursue it. Later a great mop was made of cotton strings loosely coiled. These mops are from fifteen to twenty feet wide, and are drawn over the oyster-bed so that the strings drag over the oysters. These strings form a sort of trap which catches the starfish. If you have ever handled the dried starfish, you have discovered that on the outside there are little sharp points. Now, when the fish is alive and this mop is dragged over the bed where he is, these sharp points catch in the cotton strings and the fish is caught. Every little while the mop is drawn to the top of the water and put into a cauldron of boiling water on the boat from which the work is done; but even this elaborate method does not prevent the starfish from accomplishing a great deal of mischief.

FACETIE.

"THEY say that Lightleigh Goldwaite is losing his mind." "Well, he's lucky if that's all he's losing."

MRS. DE STYLE: "Why did you cut Mrs. Highupp?" Mrs. De Fashion: "Her horse didn't take a prize at the horse show."

"Too much self-esteem," said a coloured philosopher, "gits ter be comical. Er man is boun' ter 'pear redic'ulous ef he tries ter put his'f on de back."

PAT: "Phwat the devil is a 'fin de coycle girl,' anyhow?" Bridget: "Of'm surprised at yure ignorance, Oi am. Sure it's one as roydce one of the things."

OLD GENTLEMAN: "What? marry that young pauper? Why, he can't even afford to buy coal, daughter." "But he won't have to buy coal, pa. We're going to board."

"THERE is a man," said the hostess, "who has faced death in its most terrible forms." "Indeed," exclaimed the latest arrival; "military man or football player?"

BLOOM: "I have known a fellow so hard up that he has smoked cabbage leaves." Wroger: "That's nothing. I know a tradesman in High-street who has smoked bacon."

HE: "But couldn't you learn to love me, Ida?" She: "I don't think I could, George." He (enraged and reaching for his hat): "It is as I feared; you are too old to learn!"

MOTHER-IN-LAW: "Now that you're married, I hope you won't commit any more tomfoolery." Son-in-law: "No; I can assure you this is my last."

FORRESTER: "Does Howler's wife practise her carols at home before singing them in the choir?" LANDSETER: "I imagine so. Howler never goes to church."

FAIR PURCHASER: "When the shop is crowded like this you must sell an awful lot!" Clerk: "No, ma'am, not much; most of these people are simply shopping."

MR. BERTIE: "Do you like the engagement ring, dearest?" Miss Gertie: "Yes, it is just splendid, and so different from what the rest have given me other Christmas days."

No man has any idea of the force and power of speech possessed by even the mildest tempered woman in the world until accidentally he calls his second wife by his first wife's name.

MRS. D'AVOUD: "I advertised for a French nurse." Applicant: "Oh how been in Franco, mum." "Not very long, I guess." "No, mum; Oh only stayed long enough to get the account."

"MART, how was it I saw you treating your friends to my cake and fruit?" said the mistress. "I can't tell, ma'am, for the loife of me 'or I'm sure I covered the keyhole," replied Mary.

"If you must know, ma'am," said the doctor, "your husband won't live twenty-four hours longer." "Good gracious!" ejaculated the heart-broken woman, "and here you've gone and prescribed medicine enough for five days."

WITHERBY: "I say, did you recommend that cook of ours to my wife?" Blankington: "Yes, I, believe so." Witherby: "Well, I wish you would come round to-night and take dinner with us."

AUCTIONEER: "Here, gentlemen, we have a masterpiece from the brush of a famous painter." Art Patron: "I offer three shillings for it." Auctioneer: "Three shillings! But, my dear sir, the picture alone is worth that much."

MRS. WURKELL (reading fashion book): "Trains are going out of fashion, grandma." Old Mrs. W.: "I'm not surprised to hear it, my dear. I never did think them new-fangled steam-engines would last long."

LITTLE BOBBY (the enfant terrible): "Yes; cats can see in the dark, and so can Beatie; cause when Mr. Johnson walked into the parlour where she was sittin' all alone in the dark, I heard her say to him, 'Oh, Jack! you haven't shaved to-day!'"

JUDGE: "Now, prisoner, I will read the list of your previous convictions." Prisoner: "In that case, your honour, you will excuse me if I sit down while you do it."

"FALSH villain!" she hissed. "Oh, I'm so glad," he said. "If you had accused me of being a real villain, it would have broken my heart." She looked at him a moment, and strode from the room with the air of a tragedy queen.

"WHY is a great strong man like you round begging?" "Ah, madam, it is the only profession in which a gentleman can address a beautiful lady without the formality of an introduction." (And once again did a bright sixpence change hands.)

"They did not even ask me to sing," said Tubbs, recounting his experience at a musical party a few evenings previous. "You have sung there before, haven't you?" asked Miss White-lye, placidly. "Yes, once. Why?" "Oh, nothing!"

TAILOR: "I hear that you have been paying what you owe to my rivals in business, but you still owe me for two overcoats! I don't think that's fair treatment." Student: "Who says that? Show me the man that dares say I have paid any of my bills!"

A GENTLEMAN lately dismissed a clever but dishonest gardener. For the sake of his wife and family he gave him a character, and this is how he worded it: "I hereby certify that A. B. has been my gardener for over two years, and that during that time he got more out of my garden than any other man I ever employed."

FRIEND: "I notice you have a string around your finger and a knot in your handkerchief too." Old Lady: "Yes, the string around my finger is to remind me that I have a knot in my handkerchief, and the knot in the handkerchief is to remind me that the things I want to remember are written on a piece of paper in my purse."

MATERNFAMILIAS (showing her olive-branches to the minister): "Yes, sir, this is Jimsey. What will we mak' ye, laddie?" Jimsey: "Mak' me a mason like ma father." Mater: "That's a good boy; and now, Geordie, what will we mak' you?" Geordie (sulkily): "Mak' me ma parritch." Tableau.

"We are always courteous to our servants, on principle," said the employer. "At our house you will always be treated just as if you were one of the family." "Thank you, sir," said the cook, tossing her head, "but I don't think I care to come. I have always been accustomed to being treated better than that wherever I have been."

PHILAT: "I'm afraid I was just a little too hard on him. I just looked him in the face, and said, in a significant tone, 'The fools aren't all dead yet.'" Tomkins: "And what did he say?" Philat: "He said, 'No; but you aren't looking well, Tomkins; you'd better take care of yourself.' Wender what on earth made him say that?"

"I SEE you have a safe for your silver," said Mrs. Dawson. "It's a very good idea," but I shouldn't think you could get it all in there." "We don't put any of it there," said Mrs. Hinkly. "We put it all under the bed." "But what is the safe for?" "To keep the burglars busy. While they are opening it, you know, John can steal out the back way and call the police."

MRS. WATUFF: "I sympathize with you deeply. It must be very painful to lose a fortune." Mrs. Hluck: "It's terrible! When we were rich we used nothing but the most exquisite antique furniture, but it's all gone, every piece." "The new furniture which you have here looks very comfortable." "That's the trouble. It is so comfortable that I am continually reminded of the awful fact that it is not antique."

A CITY man visited the family of a relative in the country, where he was not a welcome guest by any manner of means. After the visitor had spent one morning at the breakfast table the country uncle said: "Cousin, don't you think your family will miss you painfully? You ought not to leave them alone so much." "By Jove, that's so," exclaimed the city man; "I'll telegraph them to come right on at once."

A BUTCHER in the most northerly royal burgh in Scotland was renowned amongst his contemporaries for the quaintness of some of his remarks. On a road leading to a neighbouring parish he one day met a gentleman who owed him for some meat. After a salutation the gentleman remarked: "That's a fine fat dog you have, Alexander." "And weel he may, sir," was the reply, "for he has an easy conscience and is out of debt, and that's mair than you or I can say."

HE: "What? You can't go to the opera with me to-night! You promised to." She: "I know, but it is impossible." "Ha! I see it all. You love another." "Oh, no—no, indeed." "Then you have determined to trample on your own heart and marry some man for his money. Aha! You shrink! You expect him to call this evening! Perfidious——" "Please, please don't. It is not so." "Then why won't you go?" "I—I can't get my new coat on over the sleeves of my new dress."

A SERVANT girl was brought to a hospital suffering from an overdose of poison. When questioned as to her motive for taking it, she replied: "I wasn't feeling well, so I went to my mistress's room to get some medicine from the chest she keeps there. The bottle I got was marked, 'Three drops for an infant, six for an adult, and a tablespoonful for an emetic.' I knew I wasn't an infant, I wasn't sure about an adult, so I thought I must be the emetic, and I took the spoonful."

BINKS: "I don't see how you can remember the birthdays of all the children." Mrs. Binks: "It's very easy. The first was born on August 17th. I remember it because on that day you gave me a pearl necklace with my name and the date on the clasp. The second was born July 20th. On that day you gave me an eighteen-penny book with my name and the date on the fly-leaf. The third was born May 8th. On that day you got mad at a millinery bill which had just been sent in, and it isn't paid yet."

SCENE: Large clothing establishment. Irate Working Man: "I say, mister, this won't do, yer know. You advertise thoroughly shrunk suits at 25s. Money returned if not approved!" Proprietor: "Vell, my good man, we can shrink it more for you if you wish it!" Irate Working Man: "Why, it's three sizes too small now, and only bin in one shower of rain. Here's the suit. I want my money back. I don't approve of it!" Proprietor: "You are wrong, my good man. Shust you read that notice again. 'Thoroughly shrunk suits at 25s.; money returned if not approved!' Your money vas approved; it vas good money!"

An amusing incident occurred on the hearing of a provincial election petition a short time back. In the course of his cross-examination of a witness, one of the barristers asked: "Did you call on Mr. Bunkum on September 24th last?" "Yes, sorr." "And what did he say?" Before the witness could reply, the opposing barrister interposed. "My lud, I object to the question." Thereupon a long argument ensued, precedents were quoted, and, at length, the judge decided that Mr. Bunkum's statement was admissible as evidence. "Now, my man," said the victorious barrister, "what did Mr. Bunkum say?" "He wasn't at home!"

THE other day a man walked into a barber's shop and said: "Shave, please." He was put into a chair and shaved, for which the barber charged him a shilling. "A shilling?" said the man, bewildered. "Yes," said the barber. So the man paid his money, and as he was departing he exclaimed, looking round the shop: "You've got a good many flies about your shop." "Yes," said the barber, "I wish I could get rid of them." "Well," said the man, "I have a good recipe of getting rid of the little pests." "Oh," said the barber, "out with it, then." "You've got to pay me a shilling first." "All right," said the barber, as he paid it. "This is it then," said the man turning towards the door. "First catch your fly, then shave him and charge him a shilling, and I bet he won't come again. Good-day." As he shut the door a piece of soap came splashing against it.

SOCIETY.

THE late Emperor of Russia left the Princess of Wales, for whom he had a great affection and respect, it is said, £10,000, some reports say £15,000.

THE Emperor William sent the Queen of the Netherlands a copy of the well-known portrait of William of Orange which is in the Bellevue Gallery at Cassel, where there is a very fine collection of Dutch pictures.

M. DETAILLE is coming to England to paint a portrait of the Prince of Wales, which is, it is said, a commission from the Emperor of Russia. M. Detaille is a great military painter, and has very seldom undertaken a portrait.

THE German doctor, Geheimrath Hirsch, has been appointed special Court Physician to the new Russian Emperor. He attended the late Czar during the latter part of his illness. The appointment has caused considerable jealousy among the distinguished medical men of Russia.

THE Prince of Wales is to be abroad during March, and he will hold the first Levee of the season at St. James's Palace before his departure from England, probably during the second week in February, shortly after the meeting of Parliament. There is to be another Levee in March, which will be held by the Duke of York.

CHRISTMAS is spent at Osborne, as it is in almost every British family, very quietly. The Queen receives from numerous relatives all over the world Christmas greetings, and flowers arrive at Osborne in profusion. The party is a family one, but the Queen has kindly wishes for every member of her household for the season.

BEDS and bedding, certain favourite chairs, and a number of pictures, writing materials, and small surroundings identified with her Majesty's daily life, are the chief impedimenta that go with the Queen when she goes abroad, as well as certain articles of diet which the Queen always takes with her, including sugar—which is of a particular kind and out in a particular way—and cinnamon, which is her Majesty's favourite spice, and is taken by her with every dish in which it can be properly introduced.

THE Princesses Maud and Victoria must feel greatly their separation from their mother, who is their constant companion in walks and drives and visits to the many pets at Sandringham. The Princess dresses like her daughters in stout, warm, light but Redfern-built habitments, wearing far when walking about the place only as a trimming. Her Royal Highness when driving uses fur extensively as a wrap, foot muffs, and also to wear, and is out, as everyone knows, in all the coldest weather in open carriages. The young Princesses have not been so long away from the Princess before.

GREAT hopes are entertained of the influence of the Caritas, who is a woman of noble and beautiful ideals as well as of infinite personal charm. The Czar holds so largely in his hand the peace of Europe that the outlook is full of promise, as Nicholas II. is likely to be influenced largely by his beautiful Consort, and at the same time is developing an individuality and strength of will which will enable him to carry into effect any projects upon which they may agree. With the Czar and the German Emperor pledged to a pacific policy, the Peace Society may wish each other a Happy New Year with reason.

THE visit of the Emperor and Empress of Russia to England will probably take place at the end of June, directly after the Queen has returned to Windsor Castle from her spring residence at Balmoral. The Emperor and Empress propose to come to England in the Imperial yacht, and they will visit Copenhagen on the way. Their Majesties are likely to stay in England for about a fortnight, half of the time being passed at Windsor Castle with the Queen, while during the remaining period they will stay at Buckingham Palace. Of course not even the preliminary programme will be drawn out for several months to come, but it is expected that the arrangements for entertaining the Emperor and Empress will be very much the same as when the German Emperor and Empress visited England during the summer of 1891.

STATISTICS.

THE average gas jet consumes five feet of gas per hour.

MUDIE'S Circulating Library has 3,000,000 books constantly in circulation, and employs 178 people.

ACCORDING to statistics gathered from the Probate Courts, brewers' fortunes are made with the greatest average rapidity. Bankers come next.

ENGLISH heads the list of the European languages spoken in the world, with one hundred and ten million persons who use it. Of these, fifty-eight millions—more than half—live in the United States, while thirty-eight million live hundred thousand and only live in the British Isles. Only eighty years earlier—in 1801—the total number of English-speaking persons in the world was twenty million five hundred thousand.

GEMS.

GOOD breeding is benevolence in trifles, or the preference of others to ourselves in the daily occurrences of life.

NATURE is often hidden, sometimes overcome, seldom extinguished. Force maketh Nature more violent in return; doctrine and discourse maketh Nature less importune; but custom only doth alter and subdue Nature.

UNSELFISH love is the basis of all contentment within one's soul. The noblest form of government is that of voluntary, loving obedience. Love, turned away, nourishes selfishness. Proffered help refused begets idleness. Each new glimpse into cause and effect applies to all after experiences. Until a man has become a law unto himself, he is of no great value to the rest of the world. The perfect character is the character with the perfectly controlled will.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

WHIPPED SYLLABUB.—To make whip syllabub take one pint of cream, the whites of four eggs, a spoonful of rosewater, two spoonfuls of lemon juice, and wine and loaf sugar to the taste. Whip the whole to a froth, and serve in glasses.

COFFEE JELLY.—One-half box gelatine, one pint strong coffee, three-fourths of a pound of sugar. Pour the coffee over the gelatine; when dissolved, stir in the sugar, add one half pint of boiling water, strain into moulds. Serve with whipped cream.

BREAD CHIPS.—Cut very thin slices from a loaf of bread, spread them on a baking-pan and colour them a golden-brown in a very moderate oven. If they are not immediately used and grow soft, they may again be crisped by heating them. About half an hour is required to dry them properly, and at the end of that length of time their moisture is evaporated, and they consist of pure wheat farina, and are exceedingly nutritious and digestible even for invalids.

PLAIN SRED CAKE.—Half pound flour, quarter pound sugar, quarter pound sultana raisins, two ounces butter or dripping, two ounces orange-peel, one egg, one teacup milk, one dessertspoonful baking powder, a little flavouring. Rub the butter among the flour; add the sugar and sultana raisins (washed, dried, and picked), the orange-peel cut up in very small pieces, and the baking powder; beat up the eggs, add the milk to it, and stir both in among the flour and dry things; add the seasoning, and beat well together; pour the mixture into a greased and floured cakepan, and bake in a pretty hot oven at a temperature of 260 degrees till it is cooked enough; turn out of the pan to cool; a cake with baking powder should be cooked at once, as the effervescence soon goes off if it is not.

MISCELLANEOUS.

In ancient times in some countries long hair was considered a sign of noble birth. Among the Goths, in fact, short hair was a mark of thralldom.

A MEXICAN professor of physics proposes to foretell earthquakes by connecting telephones to the pipes of deep artesian wells and to metal plates sunk in deep mountain crevices. Any unusual noise in the bowels of the earth would be audible in the telephone, and would indicate trouble.

A PNEUMATIC typewriter has been invented, in which compressed air does the work of the levers in other machines. A small india-rubber bulb takes the place of the keys, the pressure of the finger producing the impact of the type on the paper. It is much cheaper than any of the existing types of high-grade instruments.

MESSES. LEVER BROS., Limited, have just been informed that the lifeboat *Sunlight* No. 1, stationed at Orme's Head, rescued the crew of four men from the ketch *Scotian*, of Hoylake, which was totally wrecked in Llandudno Bay in the terrible gale of Saturday, December 22nd, 1894. The boat behaved in a magnificent manner, and, to quote the words of an eyewitness, "the service is one of the most gallant and best executed that has ever taken place in Llandudno Bay."

It is said that since the introduction of the electric light public performers are able to preserve their voices in better condition, and are 50 per cent. more often in good voice. They are cooler, do not perspire, and are not husky while singing or acting. The atmosphere is much alive, and the equal temperature has greatly diminished the danger of taking cold. Their throats are not parched, and their voices are not injured so much, in comparison, as in houses where gaslights are used.

THE buildings on each side of the streets of Canton rarely exceeded twenty feet in height. They were one-storied structures as a rule. Sometimes there was a distinct upper story, but there the ground floor had but a low headway. Frequently balconies ran round inside the open stalls which served as shops, and a half upper floor or loft stretched behind; in fact, when the shops were open, the whole front of the houses were taken away. Generally from the eaves of the buildings light bamboo structures were carried across the streets, and hung with grass matting. Sometimes, however, they were more elaborately covered with a substitute for glazing.

A SCHOOL has been established in New York in which the children of the poor are taught to make and dress dolls. The charge of teaching the system is fifty cents a week. The parents pay this sum, and the little ones bring their own materials. Everything they make, dolls and dresses, is their own, and there are many pupils already earning a living in their own spare hours. In the poorest houses there are scraps of flannel, dress goods and what not, which find their way to the rag bag. These apparently useless bits are taken to school by the children, and converted into dolls and their outfits. It teaches the art of dressmaking, as the adult system is only the enlarged doll system.

It has for a long time been the belief that meters for gas and water were not as reliable as the companies would like to have consumers believe. Interested persons at Mannheim, Germany, have been investigating meters, with results not at all favourable to the meters themselves. Many of them registered far more than was consumed, and, as a rule, they were neither accurate nor regular. The vibrations due to bad plumbing and other causes accounted for some of the waste, and a check-valve and air-chamber were recommended in order to equalize the pressure. It is said that very sudden shutting off of either gas or water will cause the meter to over-register. There should be some simple and effective way to regulate meters. As matters now stand, the producer has things all his own way, and the consumer has no redress whatever.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TRITA.—Try the essence of pepper.

CUISINERY.—You can get what you require for two shillings and sevenpence from Somerset House.

MAG.—Consult a bookseller; we never heard of either before.

H. M.—If it be at Somerset House, you can see a copy on payment of one shilling.

Y. H.—You might find an old one at some second-hand bookstall.

S. S. T.—Every advertisement stands on its own merits.

JIMMY.—He has merely to announce the addition by advertisement.

DESPICANT.—A qualified success is both grammatical and intelligible.

COCKNEY.—There is no city in the world with a larger population than London.

SPOILED BEAUTY.—It is dangerous to remove moles. Consult a surgeon about them.

VIVIAN.—Vaseline is recommended to promote the growth of the eyebrows.

GRETA.—The highest mountain in the world is Mount Everest in the Himalayas, 29,000 feet high.

M. W.—Postmaster-General may make allowance, otherwise, as order was not insured, loss falls on you.

FLORA.—A flower cut in the morning will outlast two flowers cut later in the day when the sun is upon them.

MIRA A.—We have given what you ask for so often we really cannot repeat it again at present, and must refer you to a back number.

LAURENCE.—There exists a diversity of opinion as to its actual origin, but the best evidence to be obtained would seem to show that America is its native country.

CONFRAT READER.—There is nothing better for red tides than washing with soap and water and drying very well.

MARGOT.—Glycerine and fresh lemon-juice will aid in improving the complexion. They certainly whiten and soften the skin.

IVY.—Martin Luther, the leader of the German reformation, married in his forty-second year an ex-nun, Catharina von Bora.

A. B. C.—The art of bell-founding is one of great antiquity. Bells were used in England long before the Norman conquest.

PURZEL.—A grass-widow is a woman living apart from her husband; grass is a corruption of the French *gras*, or courtship; therefore, a widow by courtesy.

NERVOSITY.—It is impossible to tell you how to cure such troubles unless one knows the cause. If you can consult a physician, it would be better to do so.

J. M.—The so-called automatic hand is just unconscious or uncontrolled impulse; it is a development of the old table-turning trick.

REPERT.—One of the popular remedies of the day, and one used for the same purpose as yours, contains a large amount of salt.

G. G.—Voluntary muscles are almost always red; involuntary muscles are generally white, the most notable exception in the latter case being the heart.

L. B. B.—We should advise you to consult a solicitor. Judging from what you say a divorce is now the only remedy, and your husband being a poor man could sue in *forced pauperis*.

IGNORANT.—A classical author is a writer of the first class; primarily a Greek or Latin author; but the term is also applied to writers of the first rank among the moderns.

PLUTO.—The Jats inhabit North-western India. They have been variously regarded as descendants of the Huns and many other lost races. They are good tillers of the soil, strong, tall, and active.

GRANDAD.—Hanging for sheep-stealing is no longer on the statute books; the capital sentence is now passed upon murderers only, though it is "on the book" for certain attempts to murder.

DISCORD.—To live in harmony with one another should be the object of all near relatives, and we heartily commend the conciliatory course you are pursuing in respect to the family of which you are evidently a leading member.

BONNIE FAIRIE CHARLIE.—"When Greeks joined Greeks, then was the tug of war," is the correct quotation. The usual quotation is, "When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war." Written by Nathaniel Lee in 1692.

RUSTIC.—A certain degree of etiquette is observed in the domestic circle, however humble; at the table, in the drawing-room, or at any particular gathering. If your circumstances will not admit of display, so arrange it as to make your entertainment conform, to some extent, to general usage.

STAMMERER.—Stammering is often caused by nervousness which is the result of some physical trouble. First see a physician and be carefully examined. If there is no physical reason, then teach yourself deliberation. Speak very slowly, and leave an interval between your words. Never hurry in speaking.

R. S.—The name you give it generally applies to one of whatever size it may be when one pound of each of the principal ingredients is used. It would come to the same thing if you put a quarter of a pound of each, only, of course, the whole would be reduced to one quarter the size; spices, candied peel, &c., to be added according to taste.

PADDY.—The "coranah," or mourning for the dead, is still heard in some parts of Scotland as well as of Ireland. It is a weird chant, cries of lamentation being mingled with remonstrances addressed to the departed for leaving his friends and relatives. Professional "lancers" (old women employed to sing praises of the dead) are to be found in remote places.

JULIAN.—The oyster differs very little from the muscle in its habits; it is formed of the organs of life and respiration, with intonations which are very voluminous, and liver, lungs and heart. Like the muscle, it is self-impregnated, usually casting its spawn in May. A single oyster, if there were no other in the world, would quickly replenish the ocean.

LONDONER.—This method of punishment was originally used for offenders of high rank, but through the influence of Joseph Guillotin, a French physician, it was adopted as the universal method of capital punishment. Dr. Guillotin died in Paris in 1814. He passed through many exciting experiences, among others, a long imprisonment, began during the Reign of Terror.

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

Round and round

They madly twirl;

Round and round

In a wild, weird whirl!

Fierce War sweeps by in mailed gloom,
And sword, whose crimson kiss is doom;
With vengeful menace in his face,
And a muttered curse on the human race.

Round and round

They madly twirl;

Round and round

In a wild, weird whirl!

There stalks Famine, gaunt and grim,
With grating voice and tottering limb;
A scendish mirth in her hollow eyes,
And a torch which her bony hand grips.

Round and round

They madly twirl;

Round and round

In a wild, weird whirl!

Foul Pestilence rears her baleful head,
With its shadowy crown of a ghastly dread,
And sends from her tainted lips a breath
That shall blast the fair and the strong with death.

Round and round

They madly twirl;

Round and round

In a wild, weird whirl!

There Tempest moves in robes of state,
His awful form with power elate;
His jetty mantle round him cast,
And leading in chains the howling blast.

Round and round

They madly twirl;

Round and round

In a wild, weird whirl!

H. R. B.

MARY.—Brass surfaces can be secured with great economy of labour, time, and material, by using glycerine mixed with diluted sulphuric acid. Another good recipe for the purpose is rotten stone, four ounces; oxalic acid, one ounce; sweet oil, one and a half ounces; turpentine enough to make a paste. A solution of oxalic acid rubbed over tarnished brass with a cotton rag will soon make the metal bright.

LEILA.—The fashion of using hair-powder is said to have originated in France from some ballad singers at a fair. It was subsequently introduced into Great Britain and became almost universal among certain classes. To make the powder hold, the hair was usually greased with pomade. An act of Parliament decreed that the fine dust of which the powder was composed should be made from starch alone.

MARK.—The ancients undoubtedly measured time by the aid of water. These measures bore the name of Clepsydre, and were used in courts of justice, and it is said were first adopted at Rome under the third consulship of Pompey. A species of water clock is very ancient; the invention of them is ascribed by Vitruvius to Otesibius, of Alexandria, who lived under Ptolemy Soter, or about the year 245 B.C.

JERRY.—The a linen thread tightly round the base of the wart; if narrow, this stops the supply of nourishment necessary to its growth, and it dies away; but where the base is extensive, and the wart is hard, then the application of spirits of salts, gradually applied in a small quantity at a time, regularly, every day, will remove them effectually, and without the danger attending most caustic preparations.

VERY WORRIED.—All cracks in the floor, wainscot, shelves, or furniture should be brushed over with spirits of turpentine. This has often to be resorted to in old houses, especially if there is damp about, and should be done two or three times in the year until you have rid the place of them; and in some houses so inveterate are they that a variety of remedies have to be resorted to at different times, as they seem to get used to one remedy when it has been employed for any length of time.

ONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW.—The following is a complete list, with the date of the beginning and end of the reigns of each: Peter the Great, 1689-1725; Catherine I., 1725-27; Peter II., 1727-30; Anna Ivanovna, 1730-40; Ivan IV., 1740-41; Elizabeth, 1741-62; Peter III., 1762; Catherine II., 1762-96; Paul, 1796-1801; Alexander I., 1801-25; Nicholas I., 1825-55; Alexander II., 1855-81; Alexander III., 1881-94; Nicholas II., 1894.

A. G.—Garibaldi's home was at Caprera; the object of all his "ridings" was to achieve the freedom and unity of Italy; he was mainly instrumental in freeing the Sicilies, in overturning the abominable Neapolitan monarchy, and shared in the operations which ended in the withdrawing of the French from Rome, the capture of that city from the Papal force, and the transformation to it of the Italian Court, with King Victor Emmanuel as King of free Italy.

BAUTUS.—It is supposed by historians that the church of St. Clement Danes, in the Strand, derives its name from having been dedicated, in very ancient times, to St. Clement, a disciple of St. Peter the Apostle, and the fourth Pope of Rome, who is said, in Papal chronology, to have been created Pope in the year of Christ 91, and died about the year 102. Baker, in his "Chronicles," says it received the epithet "Danes" from having been the burial-place of Harold the Dane.

B. G.—Carbonate of soda, four ounces; tartaric acid, three ounces. The powders are to be put on separate plates and dried before the fire, and any lumps pressed out with the back of a spoon. When perfectly dry mix them with carbonate of magnesia, one ounce; turmeric powder, half an ounce; rice flour, four ounces. Mix well together and store in a dry bottle, well corked, and kept in a dry place. Use one teaspoonful to a pound of flour.

DOMOVAN.—Farce is a French word; originally it meant a comic piece of drollery or foolery enacted by Merry Andrews or mountebanks to collect a crowd together; literally, it signifies stuffing, from the Latin *farre*, to stuff. It was applied to this species of entertainment on account of the many antics, jests, tricks, &c., with which it was interlarded. Now, instead of being a street performance, it is a theatrical entertainment in which the broad comic is expected to prevail.

G. M. V.—Absinthe is the customary drink before dinner of quite one-third of the adult population of Paris. Taken to excess, that is, habitually four or five glasses a day, there is probably no more brain-destroying liquor in the world. Few, however, go beyond one glass, and this does not seem to do any harm. In fact, the French, as a rule, are a remarkably temperate nation, and it is a very rare thing to see an intoxicated man who is not a foreigner.

BIBA.—To pickle lemons, first pare off carefully all the yellow rind; cut them across the end about one inch, and pack them in a vessel with dry salt, where they should remain for a week; then take them out and dry them before a fire; spread them on dishes, until the salt candles on them; put into jars and pour hot vinegar over them. Spice to suit the taste. As regards the length of time to keep before using them, it varies from four to five months. They are said to be much better when kept a long time.

YOUNG WIFE.—The convenience of the guests should always determine these matters. If the hostess, by going in advance of them into the house, the parlour or dining-room, can, in that way, best minister to their comfort by more speedily taking their things or more readily showing them their seats at table in such a manner as not to leave them awkwardly waiting, then she should precede them. But if she has a house full of servants trained to wait on guests, and every appearance for their comfort in preparation, then she can be formal, and stand by the door while they enter, and leave them to be marshalled to their places by her assistants.

ONE OF SIX.—When dancing is introduced, the male members of the family giving the party, should not as a rule, dance themselves, if there are guests enough to make up full sets in the room appropriated for the purpose. There will generally be frequent opportunities for the gentlemen of the family to take part in the dancing during the evening on account of many of the guests not desiring to dance on every occasion. But with the ladies of the house it is different. They should all be invited, in turn, to dance by the gentleman guests, and if they refuse to take part because of the wish not to prevent their lady guests from dancing, their refusal should not be complained of, or deemed out of order.

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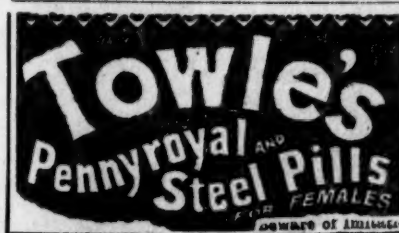
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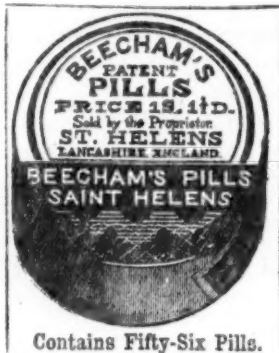
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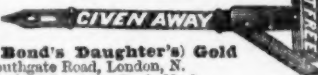
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